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# *Mystic*

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**MURDERED—BY A SEX-MAD PLAYBOY**

**MYSTIC ADVENTURES INTO THE UNKNOWN**

By Norvell, famous Hollywood astrologer

**D**EDICATED to youth and love—pulsating with the breath of romance—sympathetic to the problems of all men and women in love—compassionate with those whose eager feet lead them to pitfalls—offering hope and another chance to those who make mistakes, **ROMANTIC STORIES** is the magazine for all who love life and thrill to the age-old excitement of living for love!

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NEWSSTANDS



***Romantic***  
**STORIES**  
**DEDICATED TO YOUTH  
AND LOVE AND LIFE**



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VOL. 1

NO. 1

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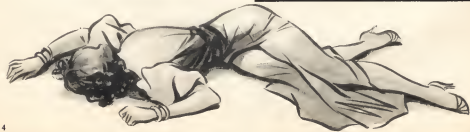
(Copyright 1937 by Country Press, Inc.)

# Murdered by a Sex-Mad PLAY BOY

"The body of a young woman was found early today. She had been choked and criminally assaulted. . . ." The brutal murder story of this luxury-mad girl who was a victim of a gruesome sex crime will shock you with its stark horror!



"Darling," Dick whispered, his face close to mine. "Please don't go with Isham. You're setting him mad and you don't know it. Besides I want you myself—always!"



"NOW, I wouldn't worry any more about Mary. I know she's been missing for two weeks, and you haven't heard from her, Ruth. But you must realize that she's more than capable of taking care of herself."

Richard Melton was doing his best to reassure and comfort me as we sat close together on the deeply cushioned davenport of the luxurious apartment in which he had installed me along the swankiest section of Park Avenue.

"But, Dick," I insisted. "Mary was my dearest

friend. If there wasn't something seriously wrong, I know I would have received some word from her before this."

Long after Dick had kissed me and left the apartment early the next morning, I paced the floor—unable to sleep because of fear and dread for my pal and companion, Mary Carlson.

Mary and I had come from poor families in western Pennsylvania to establish ourselves in the tinselled glamor of New York City. That was two years ago. We had roomed together in a rather shabby boarding house near

upper Riverside Drive, and we had worked, side by side, in a big, noisy, hustling-bustling, Broadway department store.

We spent our evenings together in the hotter spots of the West Fifties. We were determined to catch rich husbands for ourselves—and be through forever with poverty and want.

Mary was more generous, more reckless with her charms than I was. That's why I feared so much for her. I was certain that, from the way she had acted the last few weeks I saw her, she was going to have a baby. She hadn't said anything—but I had every reason to suspect. I knew all the symptoms. Children raised on the wrong side of the railroad track, as I was, always know these things. I had meant to ask her if my suspicions were true, but I hadn't had the opportunity. I wish now that I had taken the trouble to demand an answer. Maybe that would have accounted for her absence now.

We didn't get rich husbands. But we had succeeded in landing wealthy playboys who set us up in expensive apartments. We were "kept" women—the hard-faced, well-groomed, exquisitely dressed girls you see on West Fifty-seventh Street in New York City.

Dick Melton was a handsome, happy-go-lucky chap who treated me kindly and generously. He seemed to have the utmost respect for me, and he was always sympathetic and patient. But he never asked me to marry him. . .

Isahm Anson, who had provided Mary with a gorgeous apartment along Central Park West, was big and dark—the opposite of Mary's blonde daintiness. But Isahm was a heavy drinker. He was surly and irritable when under the influence of liquor. Like Dick, he came from an immensely wealthy and socially prominent New Jersey family. He was a Yale man. But he spent a great deal more time in bars and night clubs than he did in his father's vast

research laboratories and manufacturing plant over on the New Jersey meadows.

The young men kept us well supplied with money, and we quit our jobs. I think that Mary, in her enthusiasm for this new, easy way of living, had forgotten all about her original idea of getting a husband. She was satisfied with conditions as they existed.

I, however, still wanted a husband and a legitimate marital status. I often despised myself for my weakness in compromising with life to the extent that I lost all my ideals, but in my secret heart I hoped to land Dick and I thought maybe if I lived with him and if he got used to me, he might say those words that would make me the happiest girl on earth.

**R**IGHT now, though, I was more concerned with Mary's welfare and whereabouts than with anything else. We had never been separated this long since we were kids—more than twenty years ago.

And the circumstances were peculiar, too. Isahm, a constant pal of Dick's—Mary and I had met them together in a night club eight months ago—didn't seem greatly perturbed over Mary's absence. He had telephoned me twice, and asked, in a casual way, if I knew where she

was. I think Dick was a little worried about Mary too, but he didn't want to say much about the whole thing for fear of adding to my fears. A thousand conjectures tortured me. Had she gone somewhere to get rid of her baby? Then surely she'd need me. Why did she go through with it alone?

This awful suspense went on another week.

Then, one morning, I picked up a tabloid as I sat in bed over my breakfast tray and was horrified at the story which fairly leaped at me from an obscure corner of one of the back pages!

"ATLANTIC CITY, N. J.," screamed the date-line. "The body of a young woman, forced into a barrel, was found on the beach near the famous boardwalk early today. The woman, unidentified, is about twenty-five years of age, is a blonde and was clad only in step-ins and a brassiere."

"Around one ankle she wore a silver chain bearing the initials, M. C."

My head was whirling. I could scarcely read the rest of the story. The lines blurred before my eyes. I felt dizzy, weak, sick. Somehow, I managed to struggle through the remainder of the short article.

"The face of the victim was horribly mutilated, apparently through application of a powerful acid.

"No clues as to the identity of the victim or of her slayer were found. She had been dead about one week, and had been choked and criminally assaulted."

"A coroner's physician, who ordered the body taken to an Atlantic City morgue, said the young woman would have been a mother within three months."

As I read the last, terrible line, I collapsed. I guess I was unconscious for about half an hour.

The jingle of the telephone bell at my bedside brought me back to consciousness.

"Yes," I sobbed into the phone.

It was Dick. He had seen the story in the paper, and wanted to know if I had noticed it. From the tone of my answer, he knew that I had.

"I'll call for you with the car in an hour," he said. "We're going to Atlantic City."

"I'll be ready," I answered, tearfully.

"Now, please control yourself, dear," he pleaded. "Maybe there's nothing to it. It may be just a coincidence."

I tried to believe that. But I just couldn't. The best I could do was to hope that I was wrong . . . that Dick was right . . . that it was a mere coincidence . . . that Mary might call before Dick arrived.

It was a long and terrible hour that I waited. It seemed like a bad dream a year long.

**T**HEN we were gliding over the highways in one of the Melton family limousines. Neither Dick nor I had much to say. His hand grasped mine, and my deep breathing and convulsive sobs seemed to blend with the whirr of the speeding car.

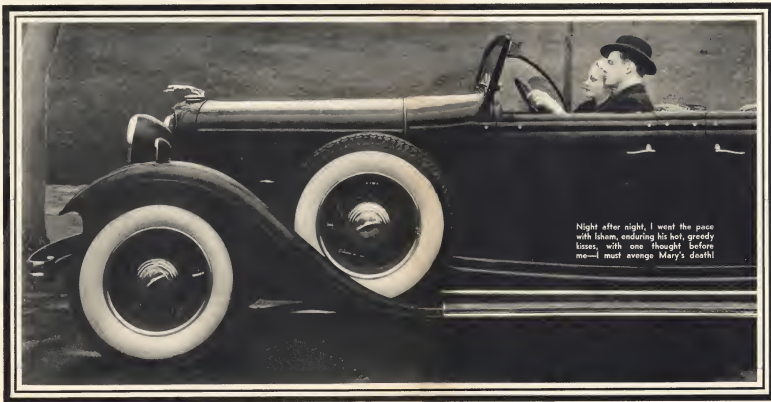
We reached the morgue at about two that afternoon. I leaned heavily on Dick's comforting arm when I looked at the body.

It was Mary.

I had the same sickening, whirling sensations I had experienced when I read the story in the newspaper. Only, this time, it was a thousand times worse.

Mary's face was gone. The potent fumes of the acid that had eaten away her features reeked through the morgue. The body was still clad in the scanty, silken undergarments. The smooth, white skin of her body was as smooth and white as ever. The shapely lines of her small foot and curving calf were broken at the right ankle by the familiar, engraved, silver chain which had been given to her by Isahm. Dick and I were there the night he slipped her sheer stocking down to her ankle and affixed the gleaming anklet. That was six months back—in the very apartment from which she had disappeared three weeks ago.

Dick gathered me up in his arms and carried me to the car. The fresh air brought me to my senses again. We drove to the detective bureau. I signed papers, declaring the positive identification of the body of Mary Carlson. Then I made ar-



Night after night, I went the pace with Isahm, enduring his hot, greedy kisses, with one thought before me—I must avenge Mary's death!

rangements for shipping the body to her parents in Pennsylvania. Dick footed all the bills.

A week passed. And, all this time, neither Dick nor I heard from Isham Anson. In fact, the first we knew of his whereabouts was a story in the society column to the effect that he had gone to Palm Beach for a three weeks' vacation. He left the day after the body of Mary was recovered.

I sought the aid of police. I told the whole, sordid story. I explained that I believed Isham was the perpetrator of the cruel, heartless killing. Police officials scoffed at the idea.

"You have no evidence," a detective captain told me. "Besides we'd lose our jobs if we tried to put the finger on a young man of Anson's standing in the community. His family is one of the oldest and wealthiest in the state of New Jersey."

"Come back and see us again, girlie, when you have something in the nature of real evidence. I'm afraid you're simply barking up the wrong tree."

I tried again and again. But, each time, I was given the same, discouraging answers.

Dick remained in the background. He supplied me with financial aid. But he said quite frankly, that he couldn't afford to become directly involved in my efforts in avenging Mary's death, although he didn't try to stop me. I could appreciate his attitude, realizing his close personal and social connection with Isham.

Dick finally said that I was wearing myself out with a task which seemingly had no chance of being completed. But I doggedly stayed with the job. I felt that I owed it to Mary. And I knew that she would have done the same for me. She had her failings—but letting down a pal was not one of them.

I spent many more sleepless nights and unnerving days trying to think of a plan to trap Mary's killer. I thought of a dozen wild schemes, but abandoned them one by one as being too fantastic—too impossible to carry out.

Isham had returned from Florida, and I began to visit the night clubs he so often frequented. I made myself as attractive as possible. I dressed in such a way as to make the best display of my sex-appealing figure. I acted merry, gay, careless, on the loose. Dick was furious at me and one night we quarrelled bitterly. We made up, of course, but I started two-timing on him for I was playing a hunch.

It wasn't long until I was having nightly dates with Isham Anson. I made only weak, half-hearted attempts to put a halt to his passionate kisses. We'd sit and drink to the tune of muted syncopation in the dim, smoke-filled hot spots until four and five in the morning. Then we'd go for rides in Central Park until daylight. Isham would pet me, fondle me. My attempts to cast off his caresses were mere routine motions. I gave him plenty of rope although I kept the lid on because this was all part of my plan.

But I hadn't reckoned with Dick. He had learned to become very fond of me. I liked Dick a lot, and I hated to jeopardize my chances to get him to marry me, but I couldn't give up my desire to avenge Mary. It became almost an obsession with me.

"Ruth," Dick said one of the few nights I wasn't with

Isham, as we sat in our apartment, "why don't you forget about Isham? He's not the type for you. He's—well, he's out for a good time—that's all. He's—he's out for fun in a way you'd never tolerate. Besides I'm sure he had nothing to do with Mary's death. I don't believe that there's any question but what he was responsible for her having been approaching motherhood, but he'd have stood by her. Mary double-crossed him with someone who did away with her but that's no reason why you should run around with Isham just on a hunch and take his maulings. Besides, I don't like it!"

"I know you are telling me what you believe to be the best for me, Dick," I interrupted. "But I've taken a liking to Isham's kind of fun. I'm enjoying the gayest of the gay night spots with him. Drinks sort of make me forget about Mary, and—well, I'm getting more out of life than I ever did," I lied because I knew I'd never get Dick's approbation and I was determined to see this thing I started through to a finish.

"But it's the inevitable ending of such a life I'm thinking of, Ruth," he continued. His blue eyes were pleading. I don't believe he ever seemed so handsome, or sincere, before. "Isham is all right as a man's man. I thoroughly enjoy being with him. He's well-suited for some kinds of girls, too. But he's not the sort for you. You're too sweet—and lovable."

He drew me to him and kissed me. His arms encircled me, and he held me tightly pressed in his arms for a long while. Neither of us spoke.

When we relaxed, I couldn't hold back the tears.

"Don't cry, dear. All I want you to do is to forget about this whole unpleasant business. Everyone else has forgotten! You'll be so much better off. And, besides, I want you for myself. Maybe I'm selfish—but, day by day, I can see more plainly that we're ideally suited. You're really a part of me, Ruth. I can't get along without you."

But Dick didn't mention marriage. Perhaps if he had I'd have dropped the whole sordid business. But he never uttered the words I longed to hear and so I insisted upon carousing every night in the company of Isham. I loathed him. I had to steel myself with drinks for his passionate kisses. One after another, all night long, seven nights a week, I drank cocktails with Isham.

AFTER several months of this, Dick gave up in despair. He was fair about the whole thing. He pleaded with me, begged me to give up Isham and the wild cheap life I was leading. I stubbornly refused because while he loved me enough to keep me in luxury—he didn't love me enough to marry me even though he had been the first and practically the only man in my life and I loved him.

If Dick only knew how much it hurt me . . . how much I wanted to be his wife instead of being manhandled by that repulsive Isham! But stubborn pride drove me on and even though I wasn't sure at times whether I was avenging Mary—or spiting Dick—I plunged wildly forward with my plan.

After Dick had given me every chance to change my ways, he decided he was waging a losing campaign. He withdrew his financial support. But, by this time, Isham had already offered to install me in an even more elabo-



rate penthouse than Dick had provided, overlooking the green terrain of Central Park. I accepted Isham's offer, and, reluctantly, severed all connections with Dick Melton. He was, from then on, just a memory. Occasionally, though, I'd meet him in the night spots when I was with Isham. He was always alone, and just one look at him would tell anyone that he was completely broken up over our separation. If he had made one move to get me back—But he didn't! He surely knew what I wanted but he never said one word about marriage—

I hoped that someday he would understand.

I shall never forget the climax to a drinking session Isham and I staged one night. We had left a night club on Fiftieth Street and taxied to the pent apartment. Isham was pretty drunk and he was especially revolting that night.

We had a few more drinks in the apartment. Then he began pawing and kissing me. His love making was brutal and demanding. I took several more drinks to fortify myself.

Then, almost before I realized what he was doing, he had unloosened my right stocking, pulled it to the ankle and snapped on a silver chain—just as he had done to Mary. A solid link bore the engraved initials, R. H.

I trembled. A chill raced down my spine. As I glanced down at my bared leg, I couldn't help but recall the chain around Mary's cold, white ankle as she lay in the morgue—the chain which I had seen Isham Anson place on her just as he did on me tonight.

It was a horrible feeling, a sort of sinking sensation which I shall never forget.

Isham was again showering me with kisses. I was too weak to offer resistance.

After that, the man was more repulsive to me than ever. I shuddered every time I looked at the anklet.

And, too, Isham was spending more and more time with me. He couldn't have been devoting much time to his home or his work. He was with me afternoon, evening and night. It was a nightmare to me. But I couldn't refuse his attentions—it would have interfered, even wrecked, the plan I had in mind. And Mary was ever in my mind now. Her voice sounded in my ears. I could see her before my eyes.

I had often expected Isham to make some mention or comment on Mary's death. He never did. Occasionally he had said some little things about the dates they used to have, or about the apartment he had given her. That was all. So far as his attitude was concerned, he didn't even know she was gone.

So it went for several months. This allegedly glamorous life was beginning to catch up with me. I wasn't getting enough sleep. I was keeping up the pace with drink rather than with wholesome food. Ugly, dark circles were slowly but surely taking form under my eyes. I was even losing weight. My figure was growing thinner, and the alluring curves were disappearing.

Isham began spending more and more nights at the apartment. I knew my chances to get him to marry me were even slighter than with Dick, but I forced myself to go through with it, now that I had started.

ABOUT six months passed since I started this arrangement with Isham. I sensed by now that he was beginning to show a lack of interest in me. I was so glad the nights that he didn't show up that I didn't bother to see whether his attentions were directed toward another woman, or whether he was merely tagging it

out at the bars in the Times Square sector. But I was definitely certain that his interests were gradually drifting elsewhere, and curiously enough because I didn't rant and rave the way discarded mistresses do, I held Isham's interest longer than any of his other women ever did—

After a session of particularly heavy drinking at a black-white nightery along Broadway one night, we reached the apartment about three a. m. Isham, as usual, was greatly under the influence of whisky, and, also as usual, was in one of his sexy moods. He took a few more straight drinks, then staged his regular routine of love-making—starting with torrid kisses, and going on and on from that point.

I took no more drinks. I wanted to keep my mind as clear as possible.

"I love you so much, Ruth," he sighed. "Your body is so lovely. I love the feel of it. I really love you, little one. . . ." His words were drowned in hot passionate kisses.

My choked breath caused my firm breasts to rise and fall. He noticed this, and drew me closely, tightly to him.

"Isham," I said, pushing him from me.

"What is it, my darling?" he whispered hoarsely.

"I have something to tell you. It's something I hate to tell you. But I can't wait any longer. You must know the truth now. It will be better for both of us."

Then I burst into tears.

"What is it, Ruth? Tell me. Don't be afraid. Whatever it is, it will be sweet from your lips. What, darling, do you want to tell me?"

"Isham," I choked, "I'm going to have a baby."

"You're going to what?" he yelled releasing me so suddenly that I fell against the floor.

He leaped from the davenport. His eyes flashed. His face twisted with rage.

"So, it's a baby, eh? Why, damn you, if this is a trick of some sort, you'll regret it!"

"I only expect you to do what's right, Isham. The least we could do now is to be married."

"Are you crazy?" he ranted. "My family would never accept a tramp like you. If you're really going to have a baby, I'll pay off in cash. You needn't expect any other kind of settlement. That's final. I'll see you at nine o'clock tonight, and we'll arrange the details."

He left the apartment in a rage.

He didn't know that the minute he left, the figure of another man emerged from the terrace, walked hastily across the living room, nodded to me and passed into the hall.

Isham was right on the dot at nine that night. He had had a few drinks. I greeted him cordially but reservedly. I took several drinks and offered him some. He gulped them down straight. It wasn't long until he was feeling the stimulant.

"Come here, darling," He drew me to his lap. "Now what's all this about a baby? Are you telling me the truth?"

"Yes, Isham. It's a certainty," I whispered

"Do you hold me responsible?" he wanted to know.

"There has been no one else," I told him. How I longed to bash him in his face, but I refrained. So far my plan was working and I wouldn't spoil it now.

"How much money do you want?"

"I don't want money, Isham. I want to be married. It's the only respectable way out."

"Listen, Ruth, let's be sensible about this thing." He shoved me roughly from his lap to a place on the davenport beside him. A cold sweat appeared on his forehead.

"We can't be married. That's out! Absolutely out! You're a nice girl, but you just wouldn't fit into my family. My old man would raise hell if I came dragging you home as my wife."

"You brought it all on yourself, Isham," I reminded him.

"I don't care a damn if I did. You'll take a cash settlement and like it. I should have known better than to fool around with a dirty little bum like you, anyway. How much do you want?" he snapped impatiently.

"I've told you exactly what I want, Isham. And I don't intend to change my mind. Those are my terms, and you'll have to accept them."

"Oh, I do, do I?" He rose to his full height. His face became hard. His fury made deep lines cut into his face—lines I had never noticed before.

I was afraid.

"Here's what I'll do for you!" he hissed at me out of his twisted mouth. His long, powerful arms shot out and grabbed me. "Here are my terms!"

He pulled me to him. His breath was hot and roared in my ears like the wind. He grabbed my dress at the neck. With one, ripping stroke, he tore the flimsy garment from my body. Then he slashed off my undergarments. I was in his arms, clad only in slippers and stockings. Savagely he threw me to the davenport.

I longed to scream out for aid. But I knew the moment had not yet come.

"Now, then, you little rat, you're going to get the same medicine that whelp of a Mary Carlson got. I'll choke you to death," he hissed into my ear. "Then I'll take your body from here, ram it into a barrel. Your face will be eaten away by a powerful acid of my own, secret formula. Then you and the barrel will be rolled off a Jersey dock. And no one will be the wiser. Thought you could pull a shotgun marriage on me, eh? Well, I'm too smart for cheap little gold-digging rats like you."

I was fighting now in icy fear. I felt as if I were going to pass out of the picture. But, somehow, I held desperately on to myself.

"I've a grudge against you, anyway," he raged on, his face contorted with hate. "If you hadn't poked around in Mary's death, no one would ever have known what happened to her. But there'll be no one to investigate your disappearance!"

Then with a brutality that nearly crushed me, he threw his body heavily down on mine. His breath—hot and labored—came full in my face. His tweed suit was rough to my naked body. It was the most horrible moment of my life as he began viciously to attack me.

I screamed madly.

Into the dimly lighted room, a figure sprang from the terrace. A powerful hand fastened onto Isham's coat collar with a vice-like grip.

Isham, big fellow that he was, was jerked from me and onto the floor.

I grabbed what was left of my clothing, and wrapped it around me. Then I switched on a bright lamp.

Isham leaped to his feet, and grappled with the private detective I had hired to witness the affair—an affair which I had carefully plotted and planned months in advance.

The officer pulled a revolver from his under-arm holster.

Isham grabbed the gun. Both men fell to the floor. Each man had a grip on the weapon. Over and over they rolled. Chairs were sent spinning. A lamp crashed to the floor. The radio was overturned.

The air was purple with Isham's foul language. He spat out one oath after another. The detective said nothing. He saved his strength to cope with the sex-mad maniac.

I stood stricken with horror as the two men tried to rise, each striving to pull the other down.

Then they both crashed, from a half standing position, to the floor. The detective's head struck a chair leg, and he was rendered unconscious. Blood was streaming from his left temple.

Isham slowly regained his footing.

He had the gun in his hand as he stood up.

I screamed wildly, certain my last moment had come. Cowering on the floor, I stared at him in helpless horror.

His eyes were glassy, unseeing. He raised the weapon, pointed it straight to his right temple. The muzzle wasn't an inch from his head.

He pulled the trigger!

The roar was thunderous.

Isham's knees buckled. But I must have hit the floor before he did for the next thing I remember, the detective was holding a glass of water to my lips.

"All right, now, Miss Huntington, take it easy." His voice seemed miles away. Then it seemed to draw closer. "You've done a marvelous piece of work tonight. I heard the whole thing, and both your conversation and his has been recorded. The death of your friend has truly been avenged."

Isham had died instantly. The papers were full of it next morning. The Anson family, through its power and prestige, managed to keep the story of Mary's sex-murder out of the public prints entirely.

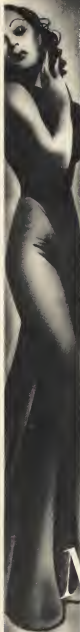
THE newspaper stories, all printed, with lured details, how Isham and I had indulged in an argument in my apartment, and how he killed himself before my eyes. The newspaper accounts didn't omit the fact, either, that my apartment had been paid for by Isham. Incidents pertaining to our wild drinking orgies at night clubs, too, gave tabloid readers a thrill for days.

Of course, I had lied to Isham when I told him I was an expectant mother. It was all a part of my plan. I wanted to see what he would do under the circumstances for I had a hunch that's what had happened to Mary, and I was right.

I never saw Dick again. My reputation was shattered beyond hope. The news wasn't long reaching my hometown and my family. So I was through there, too. I was stared at in Manhattan even when I went out to buy a paper. It was terrible. I was in despair. I had no money and I couldn't get a job. Who would hire the notorious Ruth Huntington?

I moved to a small western city where I started over again. It was the only thing to do and this time I made friends with people in my own class—decent, hard-working men and women. I am happily married now. My husband is a mechanic—and I'm glad of it. I've had my fill of night clubs, ill-gotten, luxurious apartments and New York playboys.

My husband knows about my past. He tries to forget as I do. We love each other and we have one desire that we are both passionately devoted to—to be decent, respectable citizens. I think we are.



# Mysterious Woman

*Especially posed by Marlene Dietrich*

Is it because she is desired that a woman in love glows with subtle mystery? Her veiled eyes have penetrated the secrets of ecstasy and she is as beautiful and alluring as her love is deep!

There are danger signs ahead for Joan Crawford, Arlen-born, and she must fight terrific forces to overcome love trouble.

William Powell, who was born in the Sign of Leo, is due for a cycle of unusual prosperity and success.



Born in the Sign of Capricorn, lovely Anita Louise can look forward to finding the love of her life, not until two years have passed, predicts Norvell, Hollywood's favorite seer.



Love is the biggest part of life for the Virgo-born. Dolores Del Rio is typical of this Sign. Franchot Tona, Pisces-born, is slated for fame, but he must beware of merited difficulties.

# Mystic

# Adventures INTO THE UNKNOWN

By  
**Norvell**  
FAMOUS HOLLYWOOD  
ASTROLOGER



Unusual romantic conditions exist that may change Carole Lombard's destiny during 1937. She was born in the Sign of Libre.

Jeanette MacDonald, fair daughter of Gemini, will marry Gene Raymond and success should attend that marriage.

"THE strange forces that dominate your love life attract a thwarted Destiny that will bring a mysterious tragedy into your life!"

A famous blonde movie star listened with bated breath as I revealed the weird pattern of her future life. "The complications that exist are stranger than fiction, and some of the world's most famous people will be involved in the web of circumstances that is shown in your future."

A little over a year ago that weird and unbelievable prediction came true! The world read with horror the details of the mystery surrounding the beautiful star's death.

In my many years experience as a Psychic and Astrologer, astounding and even weird occurrences have convinced me that we stand upon the threshold of a new era; a fourth dimensional world wherein Mind and Spirit stand freed! We shall some day universally recognize

and use this mysterious cosmic power that radiates throughout the Universe and which makes it possible to project our mind into the unknown land of tomorrow.

The baffling love secrets of movie stars, the complicated problems of rich man and poor man, the breath-taking adventure of warning others of impending disaster—these have been my unforgettable experiences in the mystic world to which I have consecrated my life.

A few short months ago, a sad-faced little woman was ushered into my consultation rooms. I instantly gathered from the psychic impressions I received that she was standing upon the verge of a life crisis that would shatter her entire world about her. I set up her chart, and was bewildered by the amazing information I found there.

"The elements of air, fire and water are in violent conflict in the House that rules travel by air," I said. "The

House ruling relatives stands gravely afflicted. You have a son who will be in the utmost danger unless he uses extreme caution."

The old woman's face became even more deadly pale than it had been. Tears welled into her faded blue eyes as she spoke. "That's why I'm here," she said. "My son is flying on a long water trip tomorrow. I want to know if he will be safe?"

"Beg your son at risk of his life not to fly that plane!" I urged. "If he goes through with this trip there is little chance he can save him from disaster and possible death!"

The next night in reading the evening paper, bold, black headlines screamed out, "BLAZING PLANE CRASHES IN SEA!"

I felt, with a sad, heavy heart that here was confirmation of the tragic prediction I had made on the previous day. A quick glance at the news story confirmed the fact. The unfortunate mother had not been able to prevail upon her son not to fly that fated plane to his doom. She had not been able to avert the tragic consequences of her afflicted child.

What of the love secrets that lurk in the future? Can they be interpreted accurately by means of the stars? Can one be guided to happiness in love and marriage by following the brilliant message of the planets?

Just as it is possible to point out the hidden pitfalls of disaster, so is it possible to read the mystical pattern that is indubitably shown by a careful study of the stars and their symbology. Fortunately, where there are several instances of tragedy that is unavoidable, there are hundreds of experiences where disaster may be averted.

The following thrilling love story is an example of how one can know long in advance the course love will take.

The world has been slightly amused recently at the astounding love career of one of the screen's foremost actors of the day, by his turbulent escapades, and his several past marriages. Now the world is asking in whispers how the Lothario of the screen will make out in his present marriage which is already on the rocks.

In reading this famous star some years ago when he was happily married, I warned, "You must curb the malefic influences that exist in your life and chart, if you wish to find love happiness. Violent afflictions to the planet Venus will bring unhappiness in your present marriage, and may even cause you to marry again. This may be avoided if you begin now to fight for your happiness!"

Then the gifted actor confessed, "I realize within myself the truth of your statement. There is a strange, uncontrollable force impelling me toward my own disaster. I am fighting against it, but I know with a desperate inner knowledge that it is a losing fight."

THE unfortunate outcome of that heroic struggle against a force bigger than life, is now common knowledge of the world. No one knew better than I that a crisis was impending. It came, a divorce followed, and now this famous actor is trying to patch together the broken fragments of his life in a marriage with another, and much younger bride.

Will this marriage be successful? Have the cosmic laws found fulfillment in the price they have exacted for love happiness, or will there be a further penalty that must be paid in the future?

The answer to that secret is locked within my heart, and lies in the unheralded realm of tomorrow!

There are hundreds of such intimate and amazing experiences in the contacts I have had during years of psychic

work. These experiences have made me realize that there are many contending factors in finding the goal in life and love. Certainly the course is hard enough when we know all about the vibratory forces that work their mesmerizing spell, but how much more difficult when we are not aware of the web of circumstance which can either bind us with bands of iron to a tragic fate, or encase us in a protective covering, safe from life's harsh rebuffs.

Just as there were warnings in the stars for the above people I have read, so there are vital messages in the stars for YOU! What is their message for you in 1937? Will you find the fulfillment of your most cherished love-dreams in the coming year?

These vibrant forces that point out your destiny radiate in subtle, silent streams of magnetism from the planets, from hidden sources in the earth, and, in fact, from the very core of each and every individual's being!

We each follow certain definite experiences in life that fit a great cosmic pattern. We are merely the architects; the actual building of our futures is aided by the mystical forces that we put to work in our lives.

The various transits of the planets for each month of 1937 are given below. No matter when you were born, you may apply the information to be found here to your own life. The romantic aspects change from month to month. Before making vital decisions or changes, consult the chart of the heavens for 1937, and KNOW that you are doing the right thing! You may be saved heart ache and tragedy by following the message of the stars!

IN JANUARY of 1937, the jealous rays of the planet

Mars may bring hidden treachery and deceit into your love life. Do not act hastily. Be sure of your actions before accusing, for love is a transitory thing in this month, and may pass from your life before the end of the month. Do not view your actions or those of the loved one too seriously, for the ending of this romantic cycle presages the beginning of a new and happier love affair that can bring you the fulfillment of your most cherished dreams!

For those born in the month of January, any year, the activity of the planets Jupiter and Uranus will bring encouraging action in new fields of endeavor, and may bring a social contact that will mean accomplishment in the near future.

Many famous movie stars were born in the month of January. Some who come under the influence of the earth sign Capricorn are Ruth Chatterton, Warren William, Anita Louise, and Edna Mae Oliver. The unfortunate romantic unhappiness experienced by Ruth Chatterton was more than likely due to the afflicted periods that sometimes come for all January born. Now, in common with most of you born in this sign, there is a danger signal ahead for her in love. Lovely Anita Louise will find the love of her life, but the stars show it will not be until two years have passed. Warren William resists the onslaughts of Cupid, but romantic fulfillment is shown in his future, and it is not very far in the offing!

When the great planetary clock ticks out the degrees that make up February, you may meet with exciting and exhilarating experiences that offer a decided contrast to the routine of past months. Whereas, in 1936 you labored under the stifling vibrations of an obstinate Saturn, you now come into a cycle of Neptune's influence, and you will meet people socially, and romantically, who may change the dull pattern of your entire life.

If your birthdate happens to come in this month, you will profit from changes in business that will help you financially.

Some of the world's greatest men and women were born in the thrilling sign of Aquarius. If your birth-

date happens to fall in February, then you too were born for greatness. Colonel Lindbergh, the late Thomas Edison, Presidents Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley, and our own President Roosevelt, all belong to this brilliant roster of Aquarius born! On the screen we have such celebrities as Clark Gable, Ramon Novarro, Adolph Menjou, Mary Brian, and John Barrymore, all born in this same sign. Fate will be more than kind to those of you who belong to this outstanding company. The mystical and even weird experiences that come to you will leave you with a broader intelligence and a richer life. It was over two years ago that I predicted Clark Gable's separation, and now with the coming of 1937 I predict that he will marry and find love happiness.

**M**ARCH will witness amazing changes within yourself. Romantically, you will be more magnetic and charming than ever. If you follow the inner promptings of your nature, you will allow the vibrations that sway your actions to sweep you on to new and unforgettable heights of ecstasy. Although Mars, the fighting Planet, may make an attempt at intrusion, you will be well prepared to wage a successful battle against his troublesome rays, and the outcome of this month will be pleasant. For those born in the month of March, the month holds a slight advantage in regard to business adventures and offers promise of gain through daring action.

March is the month of accomplishment and progress. You are lucky if this is your birth month. Pisces-born people possess the magnetism of the planet Neptune, and were born for fame and success. Jean Harlow and Franchot Tone are both typical of this sign. Will Miss Harlow be able to overcome the jinx that has so mysteriously followed her for years? The mystic veil of Neptune will be torn asunder in the coming years, and she should go on to personal happiness. As for Mr. Tone and Joan Crawford, there are danger signs ahead. They were not born in compatible signs and must fight terrific forces to overcome the tendencies to trouble.

The month of April may bring a sudden and abrupt awakening from a love dream. For some this offers change of a welcome nature; for others, it marks the end of a cycle in love. Those of you born in the months of April, May and June, will be more radically affected by the mysterious vibrations that will be rampant in April, 1937.

If you have married, and are unhappy, April promises release. It may be the beginning of a thrilling experience in self-development. There may be one or more conditions existing that will test your patience, but you are on the road to love fulfillment, and with the end of April you will realize this truth.

Gifted April-born have it within their power to win lasting love and admiration, but there are so many battles to win in the game of life before they attain love fulfillment. Witness the struggles of Joan Crawford in the past, the heartbreaks of Charlie Chaplin, another Aries person. Then again there is Bette Davis and Shirley Temple, two more Aries who seem to be on the high road to success and happiness!

The loveliness of spring will be intensified in the month of May, 1937. The peaceful love rays of the planet Venus will be charged with a feeling of intense excitement during May. As the sun transits through the sign of Taurus, you will feel the promptings of a strange urge within yourself. New life and greenness of growing things may strike a corresponding chord of tremendous significance within your heart. Truly the month of months for love! Make the most of happiness this month. Plan future marriage, give vent to the desire for a home of your own, and you will begin to fulfill your own love destiny!

The May-born have already found the realization of their love dreams. The beautiful Maureen O'Sullivan, Katharine Hepburn and Margaret Sullivan are fulfilling the destiny of Taurus people beautifully. If you were born in this sign then you too will probably know the soul-satisfying thrill of finding your love mate in 1937. Margo, the sensational Spanish dancer is another Taurus type who threatens to become one of the screen's outstanding sensations.



**D**URING the month of June the stars are preparing rich and varied experiences for you. The sweeping influence of the planet Uranus will make itself felt in June. You may act without thinking. You are apt to let your emotions run away with you. Judgment will be through the heart rather than through the head. Caution is your watchword in June. Try to make few romantic changes, and weigh seriously the love you hold in your heart for one person.

More than any other screen star, lovely Jeanette MacDonald fulfills the general destiny of those born in the sign of Gemini. If your birthdate falls in June, you may be waiting even now for the culmination of marriage plans. Miss MacDonald will marry Gene Raymond as planned, and success should attend that marriage. Being the Sign of the Twins, many dual events occur in the lives of those who have their birthdates in June. It is interesting to note that the famous mother of the Dionne Quintuplets was born in this sign, and that it is also the Sign of the Quints! To further illustrate the strange destiny that the June-born often attract, we have but to consider

Mrs. Wallis Simpson's romance with the Duke of Windsor to realize that the June-born were created for no ordinary destiny!

July of 1937 is a less turbulent time for love, but because the moon holds sway until after the 21st of the month, it will be well to guard your heart against fickle love that may be offered. Meetings with members of the opposite sex may be encouraged in July, but what you think is "love at first sight" may only be a physical attraction that will end in disaster! For those born in the months of June and July, the planets Sun and Moon bring strength and calmness to act in all affairs of life with courage. It is possible for those born in these two months, to accomplish much in the way of spiritual development, and to influence the love partner for good.

July is not so well represented on the screen as some other months, for the July-born generally seek out a home and marriage rather than a career. Merle Oberon is Cancer-

born, as are Barbara Stanwyck, Lupe Velez, Richard Dix, and Frances Dee. Because the love interest predominates in these people's lives it is more than likely that Barbara Stanwyck will find supreme happiness in another marriage in 1937.

August is a month of interesting contrasts. There is restlessness released by the mental planet Mercury. This afflicts in a measure, the home and love life. If you sense a feeling of vacillation in your affections, I would advise you to make no decisions during this unstable month. Those whose birthdates come in August will be stimulated when the Sun enters Virgo around the twenty-second of the month. A profitable period is ahead for those born in August.

For those born in the Sign of Leo there are good things ahead, romantically and financially. The period of trouble that has hung like a pall over your heads is about over, and August children come into their own in 1937. The sensational success of Robert Taylor, born in Leo, is evidence of the luck that will come to most Leo-born. Norma Shearer, William Powell, Myrna Loy, and Mae West are due for a cycle of unusual prosperity in the future. They were all born in the sign of Leo.

The romantic aspects of this sign are being carried out by Buddy Rogers with his coming marriage to Mary Pickford. Will they be happy in that union? There are disturbing omens in the stars for these two lovers, but Fate may be more than kind and give them the great happiness they deserve in the future!

**S**EPTEMBER may bring fulfillment of love to some through sudden marriage. If you are one of these lucky ones, there is every chance that you will find happiness in the future. This month is romantically good, especially if you still love someone who came into your life during 1937. It is apt to be disquieting for those who fell in love in 1936, and may bring about a parting of the ways. Luck will attend those born in the month of September.

September is the birth month of the great Garbo. Mysterious, silent and aloof, she is typical of the Virgo-born! Love is the biggest part of life for those whose birthdate happens to be in September. Fredric March, Dolores Del Rio, and Dolores Costello, are Virgo-born. Can Dolores Costello Barrymore find her way through the mystifying maze of romantic contradictions that have existed in her life? The stars show marriage for her within two years, but she will meet the man of her dreams in 1937!

October may present some conflict in romance. The influence of Mars and Saturn is strong. If you play safe during this month, and make no new acquaintances, you may outlive the storm that is brewing in the stars. You may have the uncomfortable feeling that you are laboring under the repressing influence of some mystical force. You are! Saturn is adverse to love fulfillment at this time, and issues a grave warning to beware lest you imperil your future happiness!

For those whose birthdates fall in October, unusual romantic conditions may exist that can change destinies during 1937. Constance Bennett, Janet Gaynor, and Carole Lombard, all are Libra-born. The attraction powers given this sign are tremendous. If used correctly great happiness will come to those of you who were born in October. Could Carole Lombard find supreme happiness with Clark Gable? Their signs are compatible. The rest would depend on them!

While the powerful sun makes its transit through Scorpio and Sagittarius, the radiant activity of the love

planet Venus will again make itself felt. During November of 1937, this action takes place. The world in general comes under more beneficent and expansive vibrations, and you will individually profit from inner reactions to these outward hypnotic forces. Carry out your romantic plans with confidence in November. Make changes that you may have been anticipating; if unhappy in love, try again; you will meet charming people at this time, and, who knows, the love of your life may materialize in November!

Dick Powell married the girl of his dreams in 1936! That prediction I was able to make because his birthdate happens to come in the sign of Scorpio. Were you born in November? If so, then you may have conflict in love during 1937, but you can and will overcome it and find happiness. Eleanor Powell is another Scorpio-born who decided that love must wait longer for fulfillment. No marriage is shown for the dancing star until another two years will have passed!

December, the last month of 1937, offers time for retrospection of your actions in the entire year. It is a pensive month, some will have found love's fulfillment, others will still wait for the new span that projects itself on the morrow. Whichever classification you fit into, know that you are following the moving finger of Fate as it writes YOUR glorious love message in the Heavens. December is not a month for decisive action. There are such intimate, glorious experiences in the near future, that you are certain to come into the cycle of fulfillment that will make for love happiness.

The December-born, who are ruled by the sign of Sagittarius, may expect the biggest financial gain of their lives in 1937. Deanna Durbin, the screen's new singing sensation, born in this sign, is typical of the fire and talent possessed by these lucky people. Lovely Irene Dunne and Elissa Landi, two other Sagittarius stars, are due for unusual good luck in 1937, and will have new leases on their screen careers.

**T**HE strange, mystical forces that are rampant in the universe at the present time, and, in fact for all of 1937, subject all prominent people to unusual and unconventional influences. What dynamic force was it that swayed the course of the English Empire and impelled the Duke of Windsor to give up the Crown for the love of a lady? What impelling and dramatic cosmic force could carry one to the heights that Mrs. Wallis Simpson has attained? Written in the mysterious symbolism of distant ages, the answer is to be found in the charts of these two world-famous people. Can they conquer the thwarted destiny that looms ahead of them? What do the fiery messengers of night answer to their heart-rendering plea for love happiness? The Duke of Windsor was born in the lover's sign of Cancer; his future bride, Mrs. Simpson, in the dual sign of Gemini. The two signs are decreed to linger together for a strange, fitful period of ecstasy, only to be swept into individually different channels in the coming years!

The life of another world-famous character, beloved by Americans and on the Continent as well, Colonel Lindbergh is of interest to the whole world. The distressing tragedy that occurred in the past is found in his chart, and for the morrow, there are danger signals. He must take no risks in 1937. Another child is shown for the couple, and the Air sign of Aquarius, which is Colonel Lindbergh's sign, can make a success of marriage with the sign of Cancer, which is Mrs. Lindbergh's ruling sign.

For President Roosevelt there will be success in his second term, but because he was born in the sign of

Aquarius, there is some danger of enmity or danger through unknown sources. The friendly President should observe caution during 1937. His birthdate is similar to those of Presidents Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley. In each of their charts the three martyred presidents had clearly written the dreadful destiny of *assassination*!

The cosmic chaos hat prevails at present inclines to war and disaster throughout the world. The United States will escape involvement, but the war in Spain will spread and all of Europe, Japan, Russia and China will be in the throes of a deadly conflict in 1937 that threatens to eclipse the World War for sheer horror and bloodshed!

Above all things, act with confidence and assurance. Have faith in the power of the unknown to mould your future into a glorious and thrilling, destiny, and you cannot fail in your mission in life!

The thrilling example set by one of the screen's loveliest stars, is a divinely inspired message for you to carry in your inner heart.

Over six years ago, when I found that her long-

standing model marriage note, she burst into tears

would end on a discordant and sobbed, "When that marriage ends, life will end for me!"

The strange workings of Fate DID cause that marriage to end sometime ago. The courageous star found solace in studying affairs of a mystic nature, and learned that here in the greatest love crisis of her life, she was being tested by fire, and being prepared for a greater destiny.

She changed her attitude toward life and love. Her valiant effort to find love happiness in the cosmic scheme, has resulted in the recent announcement of her coming marriage to a man much younger than herself.

The world may discourage such a move, but the screen star is confident that her destiny can best be fulfilled by dramatic action on her part.

If YOU will set this wonderful example foremost in your heart, you need never fear the future.

The generous cosmic laws that govern all life and love, will bring you the fulfillment of your every dream.



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Be sure to enclose *one dime* to cover clerical costs and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

An ex-worshiper reveals the sex  
orgies that mask as "ritual" in the—

# Love Rites of a NUDIST CULT

I'd had plenty of dates  
and playing-round with  
boys but never had any-  
one's kisses inflamed  
me as had Jack's. I  
thrilled to him—but I  
was unable to arouse  
in him the fiery response  
he awakened in me.

IF I hadn't loved Jack Niles with every little bit of me, with the bewilderingly passionate abandon that comes only once, I wouldn't have deliberately tried to make him mad about me. But I loved him that way—desperately so. And I had to know why it was he remained so calm when my own heart was stormy.

Evenings when he called on me, he always wanted to go somewhere; or else he'd suggest driving or walking. But this night, it was pouring a cold sleety rain, and we were in my comfortable living room before a roaring fire in the fireplace. My folks lived in Iowa and I lived alone in Los Angeles. They had lived here, too, but had gone back and left me when Dad's business needed him.

The stage was set for love—we were engaged and I pulsed—actually throbbled with desire for him, even when he held my hand. Yet I could get no answering response from him. And with the perversity of human nature, the more reserved Jack was, the more excited I became.

Looking up at his finely-moulded face and into his romantically piercing brown eyes, I tried to will his lips to mine. And failing, I raised my bare arms, clasped my hands behind his head, and drew his face down to mine; pressed my warm, quivering lips to his and held them there for a long minute, praying that I would awaken the fiery response of which I knew Jack was capable.

My lips must have told him of all the love I felt but instead of holding me fiercely to his heart as I yearned for him

to do, he held me tenderly. And at last, the fire of my caress entirely spent, I gazed up at him in confused bewilderment.

"What's the matter with me, Jack? Am I so—so unattractive you can't even kiss me as though you wanted to? Do you think I'm—?"

"Nothing's the matter, Kitten." He smiled and patted my shoulder. "Mustn't ruffle your fur about nothing."

"Nothing?" I exploded, my emotions frazzled by his rebuff and indifference. "Is it nothing that we're engaged and you treat me as though I was suffering from fifty-seven varieties of the repelling things the advertisements warn young girls against?"

"Aw, Kitten, don't be that way. Listen, honey, I'm wild about you—only—"

"Only what?" I demanded when he paused.

"Well, you see, there's no use of our playing with fire. You couldn't stand it and neither could I, and we've got to wait at least a year more before we can be married. We don't want to burn our love out and spoil everything."

"But darling, you can't put a fire out entirely by smothering it," I protested. "Why can't we be married right away and not be so troubled about—about things? I don't want to wait any longer."

"We've been over all that before. You know I've got to earn more money and get somewhere on my job, so we can have things the way we want them when we do get married. Come on, get your wrap and we'll go to a show."



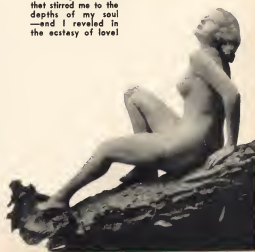
In spite of the dismal weather and the romantic allure of the log fire, I was glad to go. Anything active was better than staying there with Jack, being lectured to instead of loved. I was glad to be in the dimly lighted theater where I didn't have to talk. I wanted to do some heavy thinking.

A year more of waiting seemed to mean nothing to Jack; and he didn't realize my problem; how important it was for me not to have to wait. We had waited too long already. At first it hadn't been so bad for Jack had been different.

I tried to remember what could have happened to change him so much, and it all seemed to go back several months to the time when he began to devote his week-ends to work in the office as part of his scheme for getting enough money so we could have a furnished bungalow of our own to return to after our honeymoon. I had told him I'd be a thousand times happier in a tiny rented apartment than lose a single golden hour. But he couldn't see it that way. And there in the theater that night it suddenly occurred to me that it was way back then when Jack had first begun to lecture me about restraint and began to spurn my ardent response to his touch.

I couldn't figure it out. I became restless and didn't care for the picture. So we left early. In the lobby a friend of Jack's stepped up and spoke to him. He was an unusually handsome and browned young man, immaculate in white flannel trousers and blue coat, and on his head was a tight white turban. I thought Jack tried to get away, but he

After our swim, we  
lay talking on the  
shore. Suddenly Jack  
was kissing me—kisses  
that stirred me to the  
depths of my soul  
—and I reveled in  
the ecstasy of love!



couldn't. And it seemed to me that it was with reluctance that he introduced us.

"Nataraja," said Jack brusquely, using only the one name, "this is my fiancée, Natica Dunn."

"Your fiancée?" Nataraja raised his eyebrows. "This is a real pleasure. You should not keep your good friends apart so cruelly." His shining eyes were twinkling into mine as he chided Jack, and after Jack's coolness this man's interest stimulated me.

I laughed. "At first I thought that your turban denoted membership in some one of these strict foreign religious cults or sects, but now—"

"But now?" he prompted, smiling, and continuing to stand squarely in front of Jack so he couldn't move on as he seemed inclined to do.

"But now I doubt it, or you wouldn't talk that way."

"You are wrong, my dear. I do belong to a very strict cult. One that is very strict about many things—and very interesting."

Something I couldn't fathom drew me toward this smiling man. Besides, I had the crazy idea that if I could make Jack jealous, perhaps I could arouse in him once again the love for me that seemed to be cooling off.

"Tell me about your cult," I said smiling deeply into his eyes.

"That would be an extremely pleasant task, Miss Dunn, but something I could hardly do now—and Jack seems impatient. Let him explain about me."

He took my hand in his and I felt a card separating our palms. In a moment the strange young man had disappeared inside the theater.

Jack protested angrily. "You were giving that fakir the come-on," he accused.

"How do you mean he's a fakir, and what does his name mean?"

"Well, he's head man of one of these crazy cults that are scattered all over California. I don't know a lot about it. But I do know it's not entirely on the up and up. It's a strange jumble of Hindu Yoga stuff—something of a cross between a love cult and a nudist colony and an ancient religion. This fellow's name, Nataraja, means dance king or something like that."

"Sound's interesting," I ventured.

"Well, it isn't, and it's nothing for you to fool around with."

Jack was sullen. It pleased me to know that he was jealous, but I didn't know then what had prompted his coolness. When I did find out, several days later, the pleasure was gone, and in its place came a mingled feeling of horror and hatred.

I HAD known Jack Miles barely a year, but with us it had been one of those burning attractions that come I think only once in a lifetime to a man and a woman. I was employed as a stenographer for an investment firm in Los Angeles and Jack had come on from Chicago as an assistant branch manager. I didn't know much about his folks, but then hardly anyone in Los Angeles knows their friends' backgrounds for the whole city seems to be made up of people from all over the United States. My folks had met Jack before they went back to Iowa and dad and mother liked him—they thought he was steady and quiet and since he worked in the same office with me they took it for granted that he was all right.

At the end of a month, Jack and I were engaged and I was wildly happy. I'd had plenty of dates and playing-round with boys, but never had anyone's kisses inflamed me as had Jack's and I loved him with all my heart. Jack was all tenderness and affection until after the afternoon we had gone swimming at a little lake on an abandoned estate near our house.

We were alone in this lovely, isolated spot, and after our swim, we lay on the grassy shore resting and talking. Of course, the inevitable kissing that always stirred me so deeply soon led to more ardent love-making. At first I just thrilled to his kisses, then I got frightened, but as wave after wave of desire paralyzed my limbs, I thought recklessly: "What's the difference—we're engaged. We're really as good as married—"

Jack, always so reserved, seemed like another person. His breathing in my ears sounded like the wind. His kisses grew fiercer and I could hear the pounding of his heart against mine. With one part of my mind I fought him, but with my body like fluid under his hands I melted into his arms. Ecstasy rocked us like a frail craft in a storm—ecstasy that was half frenzied pain, half exquisite beauty, and then I lost all sense of time and space.

I wasn't sorry. I only adored and loved Jack more, but Jack seemed rather grim afterwards. We got dressed finally and reached home in time for dinner. I was a little worried at the hurried kiss Jack gave me before I went upstairs, but I thought he was embarrassed and wanted to put me at my ease.

All that night I lay awake, wrapped in delicious dreams of our love and our life together, reliving the ecstasy of those magic moments in his arms so that even thinking about it my spine began to tingle.

But the next day in the office, it seemed to me that Jack avoided me. That evening over our dinner together he was terribly morose and said what happened must never happen again.

"You're such a kid, Kitten," he said. "We've got to put a lid on— Suppose you got in trouble? I can't marry you for a year and we've got to keep sane."

At first I admired Jack even more for his reaction and worshipfully told him so. But Jack couldn't seem to understand and I was too shy to tell him that a part of me had become awakened that night that would never sleep again. How could I tell him that even his casual kisses, his arms about me, his knee touching mine, made me burn for more—and that I was restless and irritable and nervous because he was keeping from me the love he had at first aroused, and which he now held back.

For months now this had been going on and even the girls in the office began to notice that I was wan and pale.

And so, although I hadn't looked at another man since meeting Jack, I had the wild idea that if I could make Jack jealous, perhaps I could get him to marry me, for even though I hated to admit it, even to myself, Jack seemed to grow colder and more aloof with each passing week since that night under the stars.

My conscience bothered me a lot too for I was obsessed with the idea that because I gave myself too easily, Jack no longer desired me—and this was the punishment for my sin. All in all I was terribly miserable and ripe for adventure when I met Nataraja.

MY CURIOSITY had indeed been thoroughly aroused by the interesting Nataraja, and I had kept the card he slipped into my hand. The card simply bore his name in big letters, and in small type: "The Cult of the Free." Then there was the address and the telephone number of the Temple of the Free, many miles out in the hills beyond Los Angeles.

The following Saturday was a beautiful day, but I never saw Jack ever on Saturday or Sunday, because he said these were the best days for him to see his investment clients.

So on the impulse of a moment, I called Nataraja on the telephone and reminded him of my interest in his cult. He insisted that he could see me that very afternoon and would send his car for me.

Bowing and scraping, his chauffeur led me to the door of a

sprawling white mansion and rapped, leaving as soon as the big door began to open. I crossed the threshold and gasped with surprise when the door was suddenly but quietly closed behind me, and there, ready to greet me, was the most beautifully formed girl I had ever seen; a girl of distinctly foreign caste, whose sole garment was a sheer silk scarf.

"Nataraja expects you, Miss Dunn," the girl said in precise English. "Please follow me to the Master."

"Master?" I voiced in surprise, unable to move a step.

"Nataraja, our Master of the Cult," the lithesome girl replied, her eyes glowing. "The one from whom we learn the power of escape—Come."

I followed her through hallways and anterooms to a huge iron-grilled door that was revealed when she drew a tasseled cord which parted crimson velvet drapes. Opening this door she led me into a richly furnished reception room. Then, opening a chest, she withdrew a scarf similar to the one she wore, and handed it to me.

"It is the garb of the cult," she explained simply.

"But I couldn't wear that," I exclaimed. "It isn't—isn't sufficient; and I'm not a member of the cult."

"I know," Naida nodded, "but all received by Nataraja must wear the accepted garb. Look . . ." She threw open a latticed window through which I gazed in wonder into another chamber. There were a dozen or more girls, all wearing the beautiful, but scarcely concealing, scarlet silk. Suddenly, overcome with a spirit of daring mingled with curiosity, I smiled at Naida and held out my hand for the scarf. She left immediately, and with strangely racing heart I disrobed and donned the caressingly soft silk. With a peculiar feeling of suppressed excitement such as I had never before experienced, I awaited the coming of the handsome and fascinating Nataraja.

I started with alarm when I saw the drapes part slightly to admit Nataraja. I stood frozen, looking at him in the mirror. Had he been watching when I undressed? But his face was impassive, and his soft voice calmed me as I turned to greet him.

"Your cult is extremely interesting," I told him after he had welcomed me, "and strangely disturbing to one who knows so little about it."

"Come with me and see our weird and beautiful ritual," he urged me, "then perhaps you will want to join us."

He went on to explain that the purpose of the cult was to free its members from the physical laws restraining them; holding them back from a perfect understanding of the underlying principles of life—restrictions that ordinarily prevented one from experiencing a truly normal and free life. I confess that I couldn't understand much of his explanation, but it was enough to hear his voice and watch his glowing eyes. He made it all sound very beautiful and inviting and because of the doubts and the turmoil in my own soul, I was more than interested.

After our brief discussion he led me into the reception chamber and seated me on a gold embroidered cushion on the raised dais in the corner where he reclined. He clapped his hands.

Instantly, draperies at the opposite corner of the room were parted and a stringed orchestra came into view. Girls and women who had been reclining on couches back of these hangings stretched to life and began dancing.

At first the dance was slow and languorous, oddly haunting—graceful beyond anything I had ever seen. A slight perfume filled the air. Gradually the music quickened. From time to time, one of the dancing girls approached the divan on which I sat with Nataraja. Her dance became a supplication, but each time Nataraja waved her away.

One girl in particular never left our corner. Time and again she approached and with the utmost abandon lost herself in an exciting dance that was clearly intended for Nataraja. Each time he waved this girl—a beautiful blonde—away, she looked at me with flashing eyes, and I wondered if it were my imagination that read hatred in her glances. Once I thought that she was going to leap at me, and with a startled gesture, I reached out for Nataraja's hand. He instantly clasped my fingers firmly in his.

"It is only the Hindu dance of love," he explained softly. "They are dancing love and forgiveness in preparation for freedom from restricting bonds."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," I told him. "It is all so strange. But they do seem to have forgotten everything but this queer music and their dance. But that one—that girl with the hair so blonde—she doesn't forget that I am here."

Nataraja's eyes smiled into mine. "You are right. She has selfish interests and wants to become queen of the cult."

"Your queen?" I asked, wondering why I should resent so much the desire of this girl to become Nataraja's queen. He nodded.

"Then perhaps I should go?" I asked.

Nataraja turned to me and his eyes were burning with strange lights, eyes so fascinating that they seemed almost to hypnotize me with their intensity. "Never," he said, "you need never go if you desire to remain."

"And if I remain?"

"You will become queen of the cult. My queen. And I will love you always—as I do now."

The hand that held mine quivered and tightened its clasp when my fingers trembled. I felt a strange yearning to be swept into his arms. The music and the dances and the incense and the beautiful setting had all gone to my head. I had forgotten Jack Niles—almost forgotten him. It was memory of his coldness even when I longed for him, that made me check my impulse to fling open my arms and welcome this strange man or dance god or whatever he might be called. And it was, curiously enough, the memory of that night in Jack's arms that held me back, even though my emotions were strangely stirred by all that I was now experiencing.

"You are afraid?" Nataraja's voice was gentle, slightly taunting. "You are afraid to learn of love, the love I could teach you and give to you?"

I flushed. "Perhaps you do not understand that I am engaged to your friend Jack—we are going to be married in the fall." Yet even as I spoke, I was assailed by doubts . . . Would I ever really get Jack to marry me?

"I understand," Nataraja said gravely. "I haven't forgotten it from the moment I first met you. And that is why I am happy you are here for our week-end service."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Wait and see," he answered.

Bothered by his proposal of love, conscious-stricken at thoughts of Jack, I welcomed the silence that now fell between us. Without talking, we watched the whirling and posturing women. The strange Hindu music whipped them into a fury of motion.

The beautiful room seemed filled with warm, lithe, sun-browned bodies.

Suddenly a gong sounded. And as the women whirled in wild abandon, the hangings at the sides of the room again parted. Silently the men of the cult danced into the room, each approaching one of the girls who fled in an enticing dance while her partner followed.

The shock of the moment held me breathless. I found myself watching Naida, the girl who had admitted me. To me she seemed to be the most beautiful and impassioned dancer of them all.

When the men entered I saw her being swept from her feet by a tall, bronzed man. Her beautiful arms twined about his shoulders as she nestled her head beside his. With a rush he turned and whirled with her, approaching one of the partially hidden couches which lined the walls. And as he turned, I looked full into his face.

With an unbelieving gasp of surprise, I turned to Nataraja who was watching me closely.

"Nataraja," I cried, "I thought I saw—I thought I saw Jack! But he couldn't be here."

"Jack has been a member of the cult for many months," said Nataraja, "he is with us every week-end. As a matter of fact, Jack is one of us and his particular task is to find new members for us."

My little world of security and faith was shattered into a thousand bits. I had spent hours of agony longing for Jack's deeper love and had believed his lies about his working to provide for our future. Suddenly I realized why my love had been insufficient to stir him—when all his emotions had been spent in this queer cult. Was it possible that Jack had purposely arranged the meeting between Nataraja and me! Had he deliberately worked on my emotions to bring me to the point where I would welcome becoming a member of this strange cult? The doubts that assailed me shattered my faith in anything and everybody.

Jack saw me, and with beautiful brown little Naida still in his arms, he rushed to Nataraja's divan. Dropping the girl on the cushions, he glared at me. "What are you doing here?" he cried. "Why did you come here?"

I laughed, a little madly, at the idea of his accusing me, accusing me while his cult sweetheart lay where he had dropped her. She was watching us in bewilderment. A wild desire to strike back at this man who had cheated me of my faith and played with my longings swept over me. I opened my arms to Nataraja who swept me close, lifted me in his arms.

"I've joined your cult, Jack," I called back over Nataraja's shoulder as he carried me from the room.

**B**UT the instant Jack was out of sight I broke into uncontrollable sobs. Nataraja's lips touched mine but I couldn't curb my heart-broken sobs and he became amazingly tender. He wanted me to stay with him but I refused and in panic gathered my things, leaving the temple with his words ringing in my ears: "I love you with all my heart and soul, Natica, and will be waiting for you to come back to me." But talk of love meant nothing to me then.

Back in my own room I wondered what life could possibly hold for me now. Jack's duplicity, his outright unfaithfulness when he knew of my love for him, had shattered all faith. I believe I could have forgiven him some passing moment of infidelity, but I knew that nothing could ever be the same now.

So it was with surprise that I faced Jack the next day. He had burst into the house unannounced and pleaded with me to take him back.

"It was nothing, Kitten, except a passing madness," he cried. "Forgive me and we'll be married right away and forget all about it."

"Naida is lovely, Jack," I said, "and I could have forgiven you once, but I can't forgive your going to her every week-end, leaving me alone and longing and unhappy—and even pleading with you to marry me. I think you're the most despicable cad that ever lived, a liar and a cheat and I hate you. I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man in the world."

"What about your playing around with that fakir, Nataraja?" Jack cried, trying to strike back at me for the things I had said.

"I didn't play around with him," I protested. "I went to

the temple out of sheer boredom when I couldn't be with you."

"Well, you might as well know the truth then," Jack sneered, "the whole thing's a racket and I make my money on it—"

Suddenly my arm flashed out and my hand slapped him, leaving its imprint in white on his reddening cheek.

"Get out!" I screamed. "Get out." And, in a flash, something came to me, something I had heretofore not understood. I saw Nataraja more clearly and I knew that at least he had been honest with me. "Nataraja is a finer man accidentally than you'll ever be on purpose, so—get—out!"

When Jack had gone without another word I indulged in a fit of weeping followed by hours of torment. I knew then that I hated Jack and wondered how I had ever been in love with him. I felt degraded at having given myself and shame and remorse engulfed me.

Days passed—and the endless, restless nights when I had waking dreams and fitful slumber dreams of Nataraja's fascinating eyes shining into mine. At last I realized that there was no use fighting. I would risk torture once more for love for I was under the spell of Nataraja's strange charm. It was a love that would take me to him in his temple to be Queen of the Cult; his by whatever ritual the cult provided and I was determined that if he ever failed me there would never be any life worth living. And so that night I went to his welcoming arms.

**T**HERE followed days of bewilderment as I endeavored to adjust myself to my strange position of that of Queen of the Cult. Nataraja was tender with me and I clung to him with a strange mingling of emotions. I felt cast adrift on a stormy sea of love and life, with no sail or other motive power, no compass—nothing to direct me.

And there in the Temple of the Cult I became somewhat accustomed to the strange practices. The nudists sprawling about at the sunbathing, the weekly Dance of the Free, the various strange services at which Nataraja presided—all these things gradually became part of my life and I almost accepted them, though I was held apart from the groups at the demand of Nataraja.

He told me that he did not want his queen mingling with the nudists and the dancers. And I didn't care. I only waited for his free hours with me, and gradually the shock of my discovery about Jack wore off. I came to realize that the strange fascination that Nataraja had held for me was remarkably akin to a yearning, jealous love.

I became jealous of his duties in presiding at the dance. I was jealous of the blonde who loved Nataraja and sullenly avoided me. I became jealous of the girls and women who flocked to the cult, paying a handsome fee.

I gave up trying to understand why they came. I felt that many of them were lonely, longing for companionship; that others were simply starved for expression and emotional experiences; that others, like me, were simply drifting.

It was enough for me that Nataraja loved me and I loved him with a longing that bewildered me. I had turned to him with my faith shattered by Jack Niles, but soon my affair with Jack seemed to be a dim thing of the past while my love for Nataraja was vitally alive every moment of the day and night.

I lost myself in a study of the weird practices of the cult and a worship of Nataraja, who was its guiding spirit. And nothing seemed strange after a while, nothing but the cruel gnawing of jealousy in my heart.

As I came to know Nataraja better, he told me about himself. How, as a college boy, stranded in California, he had become interested in Cult work. I wanted him more and more for myself. I wondered how much the blonde dancer,

Lola, had meant to him before I had come. I yearned for him to speak of marriage; and a wedding service such as I had always dreamed about and which the ritual of the cult could never replace.

Whenever Lola saw me, flames of a deadly hatred lighted her eyes. Once I saw her throw herself in Nataraja's arms—and it seemed to me he was slow in releasing himself. It was from that moment that I began to suffer the tortures of the damned.

I became restless. There were days and nights of torture in which I began to become disillusioned. The more I saw of the cult rituals, the more completely I recognized them for what they were—base orgies of physical gratification under the thin veil of an ancient religion, brought into modern life.

When I began to see things in the Temple so clearly, I began to become disillusioned about Nataraja, the Master whom I had worshipped. I could no longer see him as the master of anything but my destiny. I saw him solely as the man I loved with all my heart and soul.

What a strange jumble to be in! I loved Nataraja, but I came at last to have no faith whatever in his teachings. I could not reconcile them with what I knew about morality and decent living.

There was no use giving the life I was leading a fancy name—Cult Worship; Life of the Free—I was Nataraja's mistress and around me were sexual orgies masking under the guise of a cult—

I WAS tortured by remorse, but with all the disillusionment, I still loved the man with whom I was living. I loved him so much I determined that no matter what the cost, I must get him to give up the Cult. The only thing that gave me hope of escape with him lay in his refusal to let me participate in the nude sun bathing and weekly dance.

There was a part of the Temple estate that was separated from the rest by a high wall. Beyond the wall was a swimming pool and warm sands for the nudists; and beyond that wall, I was not permitted to go.

Desperation drove me to test something I suspected about Nataraja. I suspected that Nataraja wanted me for himself—and that he didn't want me mixed up in the esoteric doings of the cult and that is why he refused to permit me to visit the pool. So I determined to find out. I felt that if I could join the sun bathers, I could test his faith in his own cult, test his love for me.

ONE afternoon when I knew he had gone to the pool, I walked to the closed door and swung it open. Still wearing my scarlet scarf, I boldly passed through and saw

before me a score of girls and a dozen or more men, strolling about, lounging on the sand, or cavorting in the pool. If I had not been accustomed to the abandon of the dance rites, I am sure that this first participation in the nudists' frolic would have been a shock too much to withstand. For every one was stark naked.

Even so, for a moment I was on the verge of fleeing in panic. But I knew that I had to find answers to the questions that were straining my mind. I had to test Nataraja—and failing, I knew that I would flee from the cult and spend the rest of my life in shame and remorse.

It was at that moment that Nataraja saw me and started toward me. His face was black. "Go back, Natica," he cried. "Go back."

But there was no turning back for me. Laughing wildly, I ran toward the pool. At its brink, I threw off my scarf, poised there for a moment, and dived into the sparkling water. Swimming as far as I could beneath the water's surface, I came up, only my head showing above the water. The instant I appeared, Nataraja dived after me. Over-taking me with powerful strokes, he grasped one of my wrists in a crushing grip and furiously towed me back to the edge of the pool where I had dropped my scarf. Snatching it up, he wound it about me and, still holding me in his arms, ran from the enclosure to our bedroom where he rolled me in a huge bath towel.

He began to rage. The more he raged, the better I liked it. When he stormed at me for joining the nudists, I knew what I wanted to know. I insisted that if he were sincere in his cult teachings, there was nothing to prevent my participating in all of the rites and that I intended to take part in them all as long as I remained. It was then that he told me he loved me too much to share me with anyone.

He confessed that he had been jobless and desperate when he got in touch with a Hindu cult leader who had established several cults in the west and wanted him to manage this Temple near Los Angeles. Nataraja, who now told me that his real name was Nate Rogers, said he had fooled himself into believing the teachings of this Hindu, and the Temple had prospered under his management.

I told him I was willing to undergo any kind of privation while he was looking for regular employment, and together we departed from the Temple to face life together.

The first thing we did was to get married by a court officer. We established ourselves in a tiny apartment, and within a few weeks Nate secured work. He isn't making much money but we manage to get along, and together we face the future without fear, finding courage in our ever-increasing love.



# My Phantom

He wheeled her body into the morgue—this gorgeous later came to him and filled his heart with life's great-

I WAS a student in a New York medical college and worked evenings in the morgue of a large hospital for my room and board and a small monthly salary. I was on the early night shift from seven each evening until midnight when I would retire to my little room above the morgue for the remainder of the night. In the event that a body was brought from the main hospital during the night, however, I would answer the bell and take charge of the body.

The morgue was situated about three hundred feet from the main buildings of the hospital and it was necessary to wheel the stretcher across the intervening space to gain entrance to it. Often during the night an accident case would be admitted and at such times it was my duty to admit the orderly wheeling his grim burden.

One night after I had made my rounds as usual, I went up to my room and mixed myself a drink before going to sleep. Somehow, I must have dozed off to sleep in the chair where I lay sprawled. I was suddenly awakened by the ringing of the doorbell. I immediately ran down to answer it.

There was an orderly outside with the stretcher on which was the usual white-covered form.

"Young girl killed in an accident," the orderly told me. "Leave the body on the stretcher and I'll come for it in the morning. She's unknown. We couldn't find any identification."

As I stood alone beside the covered body in the dim light of the morgue, a feeling of uneasiness crept over me.

One becomes accustomed to the never-ending silence of the dead but tonight there was a strange *something* in the air which I had never experienced before.

I was about to return to my room when I distinctly *heard a sigh from the direction of the corpse!*

WHITE-DRAPED rows of figures lying there on the slabs could be nothing else but silent. Yet I detected a slight rustle of the sheet covering the girl who had just been admitted. Then I laughed at myself—to much studying—nerves frazzled.

I wanted to hold this slim, ethereal girl in my arms... wanted to possess her, to conquer the elusiveness of her!

# stress

creature who  
est ecstasy.

Some irresistible fascination, however, held me spell-bound. I drew near the corpse and slipped the covering down from the face. Revealed to my gaze was one of the most beautiful girls I had ever seen! She was exquisite even in death. Her forehead was lily white and her face like chiseled marble. There was a faint suggestion of a smile about her lips.

As I gazed upon this vision of loveliness, a ghostly hand clutched my heart, for I knew this girl lying dead before me could have been the one girl in the world for me. There was that about her which had always fascinated me in women: a sweetness and serenity of expression combined with a mysterious allure, and my heart ached at the thought of having been cheated by death of one that I might have loved dearly if I had but met her sooner.

I stroked a lock away from her forehead. Her hair was flaxen colored and it glistened like pale gold against the whiteness of her skin. Her pale, well-shaped lips, which laughed and smiled in life, were now stilled forever in death.

What cruel



fate to bring into my life the ideal of my dreams; too late for anything but a funeral dirge! I had found my love through death.

One last look upon that lovely face and I drew the sheet back into position; then, after locking the door, I climbed the stairs to my empty, barren room and sat down to finish my drink.

Suddenly, there was a sound as of someone breathing. I felt a light touch on my arm. A voice, the soft, sweet voice of a woman sounded close beside me.

"Won't you please talk to me? I'm so lonely and cold."

A vaporous form appeared before my eyes. I struggled to regain my reason. Surely I must be mad! Was it possible that I was suffering from visual and auditory hallucinations?

I sat up and stared intently at the figure before me. I could faintly make out golden locks about a face; the lovely, chiseled features of the girl lying dead in the morgue!

Surely this was madness! I spoke to the figure in order to assure myself that there was nothing before me.

"Tell me, who are you?" I asked, and the answer came back clearly.

"My name is Flora Lane. How did I get here? The last I remember I was driving along the road in my car on my way to the theatre where I dance, when suddenly a car came around the corner and then everything became confused. I seemed to drift off into space for a time and when I remembered things again I saw you standing beside a stretcher in that strange looking room downstairs. You looked so unhappy and I felt so lonely and frightened, so I followed you upstairs. Now won't you please tell me where I am and how I can get away from here?"

I SAT staring at the now plainly visible girl before me. She seemed to be growing stronger and I could even make out the clothing she wore. It was a diaphanous, flowing gown that revealed every curve in her alluring body.

"You were brought here to be claimed by your relatives," I said.

"Please do not be shocked. You are dead and I am the medical student in charge of the morgue downstairs. Your body is down there on a stretcher and although I don't believe in ghosts I think that's what you are. Do you remember the accident?"

"Everything is so hazy that I don't remember anything, but if you think I'm dead you are very much mistaken," the voice of the girl answered clearly and distinctly. "See, I'll do a dance to prove I'm still alive."

She danced gracefully to the other side of the room. As I watched, I could see her lovely translucent body at times dissolve and pass completely through the furniture in the room. She, too, seemed to observe this phenomenon for after a time she ran to me.

"Please take hold of my hand." She whispered, "I'm so frightened. I cannot see the furniture but I can feel it and my body seems to go right through it!"

I tried to hold her hand but my own passed through thin air. Her eyes grew wide with horror.

"Oh, then it is true. I am dead. I'm only a ghost. But I am so young, I don't want to be dead. I want to live! There must be some way for me to go back. Please, please help me to go back!" Tears gushed from her lovely wide eyes. Her pleadings were pitiful. I jumped to my feet and caught her in my arms.

How can I describe the ecstasy of holding this slim, ethereal girl in my arms. I felt her *spirit* and yet her body eluded me even though she responded to my kiss at first shyly and then with deeper fervor. Her mouth was like a flower and as my lips pressed against hers at first tenderly and with an almost reverent awe, an exultation like a flame flared within me. She was so lovely—so fragrant. I yearned to possess her, to conquer the *elusive*ness of her! Yet she responded to me and as I pressed my lips against hers hungrily, her arm tightened about my neck.

I flush with shame now as I recall my brutality but I had to break down this veil of unreality that separated us. And yet, as she lay in my arms and returned my kisses such rapture as I had never known flooded my soul. I stifled her soft cries of pain and ecstasy with my burning lips and in that moment that she was mine—truly mine—my own spirit seemed disembodied from within me and floated in an exquisite dream of deep fulfillment with hers.

Spent and exhausted but glowing with happiness, I held her once more tenderly in my arms. Her face lay on my breast so that I could breathe in the heady fragrance of her hair. But as I tightened my hold on her again, she seemed to be slipping away from me.

"Flora, darling," I whispered, holding on to her as if to ward away that curious lightness, "I love you! I want to marry you. I loved you the moment I saw you and shall go on loving you even if you are dead and it is only your spirit that I am holding in my arms! Flora, Flora!" I shouted as my arms were suddenly empty. "Flora!"

Thrashing and shouting, I was conscious that the room was empty and I was calling her name into the thin air.

I SWITCHED on the light. But there was no one in the room.

Suddenly there was a piercing scream from downstairs. In a cold sweat of horror I rushed down to the morgue.

I turned on the light. *The figure of the other end of the room sat upright on the stretcher.*

The sheet had dropped from the corpse on to the floor revealing the beautiful, flaxen-haired girl. Her blue eyes stared wildly about.

"Flora!" I cried, running to her side with outstretched arms. As I caught her in my arms she fainted.

This astounding and fantastic happening is perhaps entirely too unbelievable for anybody to accept as true. Yet I am firmly convinced that it must have been genuine psychic phenomenon. It could not, after all, have been my imagination, for how could I have correctly known her name and her profession when life again took possession of her body?

Perhaps it was her ghost that I had made passionate love to, and the force of our love might have given her enough power to come back into her body and live again. But anyway Flora lives and my love for my wife is as great today as it was on that never-to-be-forgotten night when she first became mine.





"The intense craving for dope has made me almost insane," cries Ruth, a respectable young girl who was enticed to the use of dope in an Oriental's criminal den.

# Dope Orgies!

I AM off the dope now.

But I have been almost insane. I dreamed for months of trying to kill Sing Lee, the man who is responsible for the horrors I have lived through. But now I am trying to forget.

I met him, about August 15, 1935. Another girl introduced me to him. I didn't know what a horrible thing she was doing. I thought she was a friend of mine. And she had been till Lee got hold of her. He had made her a fiend. I wanted to kill her, too, till I realized how near I came to doing the same thing she did.

Lee's place was on ————street then. She said he was fascinating and that he gave the swellest parties.

I told my folks we were going to stay all night at her house for she said the parties were late. Then we told her folks we were going over to another girl's.

Lee met us in Oriental costume, for he was a cultured Chinese—at least that's how my friend had described him to me. He talked good English and he was very polite. He showed us the wonderful Chinese things he had. He was very dignified.

The other girl and I sort of smiled at each other behind his back. We were the only ones there at the time. After a while some other girls came. They were all girls at his party. We thought it was quite a lark. At least I did.

Then we had dinner—supper, I suppose it was, for it was after midnight—but it was served like a dinner. There were queer Chinese things to eat, things I had never heard of before. But they tasted good.

There was a little wine. I didn't drink much of that. I was always careful about drinking. But my girl friend drank a lot. I began wondering about her.

After dinner we all went through the apartment. He took us into his bedroom. It was furnished like the rest of the place. But there were pictures on the walls.

I was a little startled when I looked at the pictures but people have different ideas about things like that. And anyway, this was a man's room.

On a little table beside the bed, was a queer looking tube. One of the girls picked it up. There were other strange things on the table.

"What's this?" she asked.

"Atmosphere," Lee said, smiling.

"What do you mean?" the girl insisted.

*Exposed by an innocent girl  
who was caught in the web!*

"In my country," he said, "many people once smoked opium. This is an opium pipe."

"An opium pipe?" several of us exclaimed. We crowded around. I noticed that some of the girls didn't say anything.

"Do you smoke it?" the first girl asked. Lee smiled. "Oh, I've tried it out," he said. "I don't think much of it."

Then my friend spoke up. "Let's see you do it," she said.

He smiled again. Then he took up a little lamp, a small brass affair with a base about the size of a salmon can. It had a domeshaped glass shade. He lighted it. Then he searched about for something. He didn't seem to know just where it was.

He came back in a moment with a metal container.

"Wait," he said. "We must have the right atmosphere."

He went about the apartment and lighted some incense burners. Soon the air was heavy with Chinese incense.

Then he took a needle, thrust it into the container and rolled it. Soon he drew it out with a tiny bead of something on the end of it. He held it over the blaze of the lamp till it turned brown and began to sizzle. Then he threw himself across the bed with his head near the lamp and drew the sizzling opium hack and forth across the small opening in the pipe while he drew long puffs on the stem.

He smiled again.

"Want to try it?" he said. I drew back.

But my friend Sally stepped forward.

"I'll try anything," she said.

But he put the pipe away. "Some other time," he said.

But she insisted.

"Well," he said. "I'll let all of you try it, but only a little. It is dangerous. But if you try a little of this first it won't hurt you."

He took a tiny capsule out of his pocket and gave us each a little of the substance it contained. He showed us how to sniff it "so that the opium won't have any effect," he said.

I had never heard of heroin up to that time. It all looked harmless. I didn't see why I should be a spoil sport. Then he had the girls lie across the bed and showed them how to draw on the pipe while he moved the opium pills across the opening. He gave them only a little.

I was careful not to draw very hard on the pipe. I thought I was playing safe. Some of the other girls did the same. But I noticed that others drew on it eagerly.

The tang of opium was in the air. But it was overlaid with the heavy smell of incense.

Finally we went out into the other room. I saw then that there were others who had come in with several young Chinese. Lee turned on a phonograph and some of the girls started to dance.

Suddenly I found I was having a wonderful time. I was dancing more gaily than I had ever danced before. I didn't have a trouble in the world.

It was warm in the room but Lee said he had to keep the windows down to keep the smell of opium smoke from getting out. I slipped off the coat of my light silk suit and the coolness of my bare arms felt good. I danced again.

One of the girls pulled what I thought at the time was a grand stunt. She was a wonderful dancer—stage-trained. I think. She suddenly declared she was too warm and she took off her dress. I gasped.

But underneath she had on a wonderful little dancing costume and in a moment more she was doing a beautiful dance. I was struck by her grace and beauty. I wished I could dance like that. I felt so good I almost believed I could.

Then one of the girls who had been eating candy, which Lee had passed around, quite rapidly followed her lead. She slipped off her dress and was dancing in smart little silk shorts and brass. She too was very beautiful.

The boy I was with passed the dish of candy to me. I was becoming embarrassed and was glad that he had captured my attention and that he seemed to pay no attention to what those girls were doing.

*I spent many nights at Sing Lee's apartment. . . . I sank to the lowest depths a woman can sink . . . but I had to have that drug. I couldn't live without it!*

I took some of the candy and ate it. He offered me more but there was something about it I didn't like. We danced again. But I was so warm I nearly suffocated. Other girls had stripped off most of their clothes. The boys apparently thought nothing of it.

In a little while I was dancing just as they were. But something was happening to me. I realized suddenly that the Chinese boy was kissing me. And I was kissing him. I was kissing him with an abandon I had never kissed anybody before.

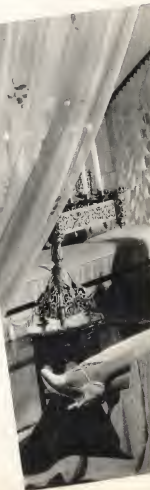
Everywhere now the girls were in the arms of the Chinese men. I glanced into the bedroom and saw several of the girls hitting the pipe again.

Lee came to me.

"If the opium is making you feel queer, take some more

of this," he said. He handed me one of the little capsules I took another whiff of it. It made me feel better. I had been a little frightened before. But this took the feeling away from me.

I danced with the Chinese boy again and the touch of his arms was ecstasy to me. He brought me the candy again. I realized then that there was a drug of some kind in the candy. But I was in a reckless mood. I was ready for anything. I took another piece of candy. Suddenly I seemed to be a flaming bundle of live pulsating nerves. Fire seemed to pour from my body, and then I became possessed of the most powerful urge



that I ever experienced in my life. It seemed to pull at me like a thousand magnets so that I was bathed in perspiration and the only desire I had was to fling myself into the arms of this man and to press against him in a frenzy of mad, unleashed, unrestrained emotion.

I have never been able to bring myself to tell everything that happened there that night.

SING LEE, as I found out Lee's real name was, went about with a smile on his lips. I noticed that he did not take any of the stuff in the little capsules. He had taken only about one whiff of the opium. I found out afterward that he never used drugs. Neither did any of the other Chinese. They used it only on the girls.

In the morning I woke up beside the opium pipe, dazed, confused, with only a dim resemblance of fantastic dreams.

Lee was there. Most of the others had gone. My girl friend was there but she was still unconscious in the deep sleep of the opium pipe.

"I'm afraid you are very susceptible to the opium," Lee said. "I am sorry. These little capsules will fix you up." He gave me another, "If you feel low take a little of this. Take it every now and then if you have trouble throwing off the effects. And let me know if it bothers you."

Frightened almost out of my wits, I made my way home. I couldn't wake Sally but Lee told me she would be all right. I was stricken with shame as I made my way into the house. My parents noticed something wrong, but I told them I wasn't feeling well, that I thought I would sleep all day.

Mother was very solicitous. I think she was afraid I had been drinking somewhere but she soon found that there was no liquor on my breath. She took care of me that day. I didn't let her see me take the stuff from the little capsules for I was afraid she would know I had tried that terrible opium.

But the terrible, depressed, nervous feeling kept coming over me. And the capsules brought such instant relief. I kept taking the heroin for several days without knowing what it was.

When it was gone, I felt worse than ever. I remembered what Lee had said and I went back to him.

He was very solicitous. He gave me another capsule. And from that moment I was his slave. For the capsule was soon gone and I went back to him for another. The depression was terrible when the effect of the drug wore off. And the relief was so wonderful.

I found that I trembled with nervousness if I didn't have the drug. I realized gradually what it was he had given me. But the thing had got a hold on me. I would swear that I wouldn't go back to Lee, that I wouldn't take any more of it. But I was in constant fear that what I had done would be discovered. Every time I got nervous my mother would begin to worry and I had to take more heroin so that she wouldn't learn the truth.

After a while, Lee told me that he couldn't give me any more. It was terribly expensive, he said, and he had given me a lot already.

I told him I would pay him. He sold me some then. And I went back again and again. The little bit of money I had soon went. But the craving was on me now worse than ever. I had to have that drug.

He told me then that he would give me some more if I would come to another party and bring a girl friend. I realized then what he was asking me to do.

I found myself thinking of some girl I could take. But

I put the thought away from me. I wouldn't let another girl in for the mess I was in. So I went to the party alone.

I was a little afraid I wouldn't be welcome without another girl, but I was. And I had all the drug I wanted at that party. And I had more opium.

Another Chinese boy paid for the drug. And I paid him in the only way I could without bringing in another girl. I would do anything rather than that, I thought.

My folks went abroad then. They had wanted me to go with them but I pleaded that I wanted to stay there and go on working. I told them I thought I was about to have a promotion. They were pleased at the spirit I showed. And so they left me.

After that I spent days at a time in Sing Lee's apartment. I sank to the lowest depths a woman can sink, but I never took another girl to Lee's apartment. There were other girls who wouldn't do that either. And the things they did to avoid it make me shudder. I wanted then to kill Sing Lee. But I didn't dare, for if I did, I wouldn't be able to get any more of the drug.

Then the raid came. I was glad that it did. They questioned me and I told everything. They took care of me at the police station and they cabled my parents. Then I was sent off to a cure. I suffered the tortures of a thousand purgatories but soon the appetite was gone.

I'm trying to rebuild my life, and my father and mother have stood by me. I can't face my friends. But I am still proud of one thing. I am proud of the fact that I didn't take any other girls to Sing Lee's place, in spite of everything I had to do to keep from it. I'm wondering if I won't some day find forgiveness for what I did do in that.

Arraigned before Judge ——— in the United States District Court, Lee pleaded not guilty to two counts charging violation of the Harrison Anti-Narcotic act and insisted on a jury trial.

By this time Washington was taking an unusual interest in the case and the Commissioner of the Bureau of Narcotics requested a special report.

It had been found that Lee was about forty-seven years old. He had operated for years in Detroit and other cities as he operated in this city. Once, in the place on ——— street a young, white girl, had been found dead in his apartment but he had been released when it was found the girl had died of natural causes.

After the stories of the different girls had been told another search of his apartment had revealed several love drugs, aphrodisiacs, which had been used in candy and in the food he served at his dinners.

THE court sentenced him to serve four years in Atlanta Penitentiary and fined him \$1,000 on the first count, and on the second count six years and \$3,000 fine, the sentences to run consecutively.

Sing Lee put up a terrific fight to have the sentence set aside. From every corner of the underworld, racketeers and criminals came to his aid with funds and the crookedest —and cleverest lawyers that tainted money could buy—sought to break the severity of the sentence. But public opinion, once aroused, is a terrific force and women's clubs and civic bodies became interested in the case with the result that Sing Lee was unable to beat the rap and he was sent away.

As I write this, I am cured of the drug habit and have gone back to work—but not in our city. I came to live with my grandmother in a small town until the furor dies down and until such a time when I may go back home with my past disgrace forgotten and forever behind me.

EVERY woman is in love, or wants to be in love! What's more, at some time of her life or other, every woman craves marriage with her ideal man. To be a success marriage *must* be the true mating of two kindred souls. However trite that may sound, it must always be considered as the basic factor of the marriage law.

But, says the woman, how can I find my ideal man? How can I know that a certain type of man will be sympathetic with my own character? For every woman realizes, that even as she has doubts of what true love really is, so do men wonder whether they are in love with the right kind of girl. It is here that the mating instinct must be trusted. When a girl becomes engaged to be married, she is really following all the subconscious ideas of what she has always wanted her husband to be.

In a woman's mind there are definite categories of men. In the notes on the next page are listed these categories. If you are in love, if you are thinking of being married, or if you have already chosen the man who is to dominate your life, try to place him in one of these classes. The rest is easy—for, having once understood his character, you may readily adjust yourself to marriage with the man you have chosen.

In the notes are listed the descriptions of the various types of men. Now study the characteristics of each class and then place the man in whom you are interested in the proper class.

NOW that you have placed your lover in the class that best describes him, you must know the key to his personality. Listed below are the character analysis of the different classes:

Class A—This man has the highest type of character. He has a clear-headed logical outview on life. He is attentive to women, and has a certain charm which endears him to every woman that he meets. He is a business man, thinks a great deal, but holds to his ideals in spite of everything, especially his ideals as to what a woman should be. He is courageous, but not emotional, and is therefore rather hard to understand. To the woman who charges herself with living with a man of this type, a

# I Want a Man!

Every woman wants love. Every woman craves marriage. But she must trust her mating instincts alone when it comes to the choice of her real lover.

How can a woman find her true lover? How much should she give to the man whom she adores? Those questions must be answered when a man comes to a woman seeking the love happiness she can give.



word of warning is necessary. She must be patient at all times, and despite the fact that she may not always be able to understand her man, she should give him all the inspiration of a warm sympathetic love.

**Class B**—This is the dreamer type of man—the stuff of which artists are made. He is of an extremely sensitive nature, and is gentle and kind. His devotion knows no bounds, but because of his friendly, peaceful nature he is often abused and mistreated by the woman of his choice. He lavishes attention upon her, and does not expect too much in return. Therefore, she must be careful to see that full justice is given him in love, because left alone, he would never demand his just due.

**Class C**—The key personality of this class is very deceptive. A man of this type is, at first appearance, of fine stalwart character, but his appearance is deceptive. He is apt to be very irrational, and illogical. He loves arguments and will fight at the slightest pretense. He is of a forceful mind, and is therefore, extremely stubborn. He works too hard for his own good, and is always on the look-out for business opportunities. As a lover, he is hot-natured and extremely passionate. His devotion is spontaneous, and sometimes apt to peter out quickly. He must be treated carefully, must be bahied to a certain extent. A woman of a quick temper would never be able to live in harmony with a man of this type.

**Class D**—The intelligent type. A man in this category thinks quickly, and is most observant. He has a very good memory and is most energetic. In fact his energy is apt

to wear down his strength. He is very nervous and high-strung, and is restless, if made to remain quiet for more than a few minutes at a time. He has never learned the secret of relaxation; therefore, he is apt to be slightly impatient with the ideas of other people. The woman who loves him must learn how to keep him calm and happy; she must make him relax in love, and find the serenity that he deserves; otherwise, his health will be broken, and his nerves will give way.

**A WOMAN** who loves a man may, either make him or break him. It is essential therefore that every woman recognize her man—that she know his faults, his virtues. She *must* understand his personality, and treat him according to the characteristics of this personality.

Perhaps your lover may not fit definitely into one of these categories. The reason for this is that naturally some of his characteristics may remain hidden to you. It is for you to discover them. Decide the class that the man you love fits best into and then rest assured that he has all the characteristics of that class, whether they be shown openly or not.

Love is a strong force—it may bring great happiness or

it may bring disaster. Thus it is for you, the woman who loves, to handle it gently, to direct its power carefully, and to make of the man you love, the ideal mate of your life.

The men in the **Class A** type—the big-boned gaunt, masculine man, likes to be the aggressor in love and likes his woman to be yielding and pliable. Do not make the mistake, if your man is of this type, of giving too much—or too easily. Intensely masculine men like to fight for their women. If a woman is too "easy," they lose interest. Once she is theirs, their love never grows less but they must not win too easily. Such a man must possess his woman, but he must fight for her. In generations before civilization, he was the cave man who dragged his woman by her hair and killed his rivals to make her his. After marriage, such a man is invariably faithful to his wife, for having had all the joys of fighting for her, possessing her, breaking her to his will, so to speak—he remains intensely loyal.

**Class B** men are those who appeal to larger, more masculine women. They are the type of men women love to mother! They are usually artists or musicians and women adore them. Often such men can be soul-pinchingly cruel in their passion but women chosen by men of this type are strong and can take abuse because like the mothers they essentially are, they forgive easily. Men of this type need constant encouragement for if women do not phone them and remind them that they are in love, such men often let a love die. When married, they need even more mothering than they had in the pursuing, or pre-marriage period. They love to dump their troubles at the feet of

their wives as if to say: "Here, here, carry the load!" **Class B** men are affectionate, more than passionate, but if their wives will cater to their whims, soothe their wounded feelings and generally play up to them, they make satisfactory husbands.

**Class C** men are usually terribly vain. They like to be flattered—told that they are "wonderful." They are unusually passionate men and if they are lucky enough to marry passionate women, they make by far the best husbands. They are the men who furnish mink coats and diamond bracelets—when they have money. They are not entirely faithful for theirs is a passionate nature and it is hard to find one woman to satisfy them. But their infidelities are passing and they invariably return to their wives, lavish in their gifts.

The **Class D** man is hardest to live with of all four types. He is the intellectual snob, intolerant of stupidity and intolerant of ship-shodness. His woman must be perfect or God help her! She must be clever, bright, smart—she must be the perfect hostess, the perfect wife and the perfect mother. When such a man finds the right woman, he is proud of her and treats her like an intelligent equal.

Have you placed your ideal man in this category? If so, then you need never worry again how to hold him!

The age-old call of Man to Women, the age-old laws of Marriage, must always be obeyed. And so it behooves a woman to analyze her lover's type with care.

The **Class A** type of man is big-boned, gaunt, and very muscular. He is extremely tall, with eyes of the blue that borders upon hazel. His features are large, his hands big-knuckled, squarely formed, and bony, with thick, strong fingernails. His feet are long. Dark hair, a deep voice, and prominent cheekbones are his outstanding characteristics.

The **Class B** man is of a smaller build than the **Class A**. He is not extremely athletic, but rather small-boned and delicately knit. His height is extremely variable, as is the color of his eyes. His ears are small and set close to his head. He has fine hair, his hands are sensitive, his feet small.

The **Class D** man is very lean and tall, but well-knit and well-proportioned. His muscles are not prominent; his height is variable. His eyes are usually blue, his face oval. His ears are large. He is most often a brunette type, and his voice may be baritone or tenor. He has long, slender fingers, and medium-sized feet.

The **Class C** man is of stocky build, with dark, his ears prominent, his eyes are usually but very clear. His hands are his outstanding mark. They are usually squarely formed, with short fingers, and a great strength. His feet are of medium size.

# LOVE-STARVED— AT FORTY

When a man denies his wife  
the love she craves, can  
she be blamed if she seeks  
her true mate elsewhere?

THERE is something infinitely pathetic and touching about the sight of youth gone wrong, of slim young feet straying from the straight and narrow path to go plunging down the ways of dalliance! A young girl falls . . . she forgets the things that young girls should never lose sight of . . . We say, "How sad!" We pity or judge her, according to our lights, but always there is regret in our hearts and a feeling of sorrow. To laugh at youth caught in the dark web of youth would be unthinkable . . . But how about a woman over forty? She feels: she struggles; she suffers; perhaps she throws her world away for one brief hour of madness . . . but do we pity her? No. We turn from her with mocking laughter. "She's a fool!" we say . . . Yes, but fools have hearts that throb and ache . . . fools can deal in bright lustrous dreams.

It was just ten days after my fortieth birthday that I first met Barry. There were a dozen or more gathered in Janet Sloane's duplex studio for "tea."

In a corner, against the wall, I sat in a deep chair and watched it all . . . it was like a play to me . . . I belonged to such a different world. A gray prim world where laughter was slightly ill-bred. An old man's world and an old man's house, dim with the ghost of the wife who had preceded me. He was sixty, the man whom I had married ten years before. Sixty, and grimmer than sixty has any right to be! A parchment man . . . written over with throu-shalt-nots!

Sitting there quietly in my corner, an unaccustomed cocktail glass between my fingers, I thought: "How glorious to be Janet Sloane! To live in a lovely studio and have gay and thrilling people about one always."

And then, the studio door opened and someone shouted, "Hi, Barry, old son!" And someone else called in a soft, feminine drawl, "Why, Barry Conrad, you old meanie, you! You're way behind on drinks! Come over here and catch

"I'm madly in love with you, Anne. Age doesn't count! I love you and I know you love me too . . . And that's all that matters!"



up . . ." And Janet held out both her hands and put up her face for the newcomer's casual kiss.

He was tall and lean and very brown, this Barry Conrad. That was what I noticed first.

"Swell party, Jan," he said. "Say, look . . . how about washing up? I've got a little blood on me here and there."

"For Heaven's sake, Barry! What was it, a dog fight?"

"How'd you guess it?" grinned Barry, holding up a pair of lean, stained hands. "A big bully of a police dog hopped onto a little whispas down the block and I just happened along in time. It's a terrier, I think . . . or will be, when we've got the blood washed off . . ."

Janet gave a little shriek. "When we . . . Oh, Lord, Barry, have you brought another stray animal to my door? He's always doing it!" she told the room at large. "Last time it was a monkey he found on a dock and my tapestries still bear the scars! Barry, you *didn't* bring a dog here, did you?"

"Well, where else would I bring it? Oh, you wouldn't turn out a poor little bloody bit of a dog, now, would you, Jan, and you with a heart of gold?"

"None of your Irish, now, Barry!" Janet told him severely. "I'll have no pups around this place and that's that. Here . . . I'll take you over to Anne Dunn . . . she's got an estate up the Hudson big enough to raise elephants on! Wish your dog off on her!"

"I'll do that!" he answered, looking down into my eyes with an ingratiating little-boy sort of grin. "You'll take the little devil, won't you? He's got a swell, long, pink tongue! Wait! I'll go and bring him in."

"You'll do nothing of the sort, my lad!" said Janet. "If there's any inspection to be made, just you do it in the hall! Go on, Anne, humor him! He's the madman from Dublin, that one!"

"Come on!" he said, and caught my two hands and drew me out of my deep chair. With an arm around my shoulders, he propelled me through the room and shut the door behind us. In the hall on a chair, the dog lay on a folded coat.

"Look . . . cute, isn't he?"

"Well . . . I've seen prettier dogs!" I told him.

It lay on its side with its poor little torn head resting on its forepaws. Barry touched the little heast gently, "Poor old fellow," he said. "But a most beautiful and enchanted lady is going to take you to her castle and wave a magic wand over you! I swear it."

"Idiot!" I laughed.

"Yes, but it's such fun to be mad! You can get away with things . . . for instance . . . If I were a polite, well-balanced person . . . the sort of man who believed in spinach and daily dozens and all that, I couldn't tell a perfect stranger that I think she's got the most gorgeous eyes I ever saw, could I?"

"I never heard anyone work so hard to win a home for a little stray dog!" I told him. "You needn't. I'll take him! Though I can't think what Otis will say . . . Otis hates dogs around the place!"

"Otis? The ogre who guards the castle by any chance?"

The description was so pat that I laughed a little ruefully. "With the sword of his disapproval!" I said. "And it's such a long, keen sword . . ."

"I can see him now!"

I gave a little involuntary start. "Where?" And then we both laughed at the absurdity. "But . . . but you see, I'm supposed to be at a committee meeting of Otis's

pet charity I . . . I'm not encouraged to attend cocktail parties, Mr. Conrad . . ."

Barry Conrad whistled softly. "I . . . see . . ." he said. "Yes, I see a lot of things! What is back of your eyes for example . . . why they look so haunted and so haunting . . . why your lips have that little droop . . . why . . ."

"Let's not talk about me!" I broke in hastily. His voice was so velvety warm, his blue eyes so filled with a sort of tender railleury. I drew back a little, catching my breath. "Oughtn't we to go in? Janet will think we're lost!"

He said unexpectedly, "I'm not at all sure that I'm not, either!"

"Not what?" I gasped.

"Lost," he said, and, taking my hand, led me back into the candlelight.

THAT was the beginning.

I didn't sleep that night. I lay in the wide, old-fashioned bed that Otis insisted that we share, and wove delicate school-girl dreams about Barry Conrad and . . . and yes, myself! Well, what of it? Hadn't I the right to dream? Otis Dunn owned my body, but surely my soul belonged to me alone! Beside me, in the bed of carved walnut, my husband slept, his gray face turned away from me, his high-veined old hands folded on his chest. Even in his love-making he was austere, reserved and the act of possession left me cold, unmoved: a meaningless, uncomfortable ritual that was part of my obligation as his wife.

Leaning there on one elbow, my dark hair swinging in its silky braids over my shoulders, I looked down at Otis Dunn's face and thought, "He's old! He's like an effigy on a tomb . . . a stone man lying with quiet hands on his narrow chest . . . He might be dead . . ."

Why do women marry without love? What madness leads them into such a trap? I never loved Otis Dunn; never from the first. Did he love me? I don't know . . . He was my mother's lawyer, and all through the years of her illness, he would come to our house and see her for a brief hour on the last day of every month.

And then, after she passed away, quietly, in her sleep, Otis came to me. I remember that he lifted my hand in his, and pressed his thin grayish lips against my fingertips and a little shiver ran over me, as if a ghost had brushed my skin.

"Anne, my dear, my house is very lonely," he told me. "I should be honored to have you be my wife . . ."

And I . . . I was thirty, and I knew nothing of life or men or love or what it would mean to be this man's wife. For over twelve years, I had sat at my mother's side or wheeled her chair slowly up and down in the sunlight . . . what could such a woman know of life? How could I dream that the sweet, wild madness of love would ever draw close to me?

Barry Conrad . . . why had the lightest touch of his hand on my arm set my blood to singing through my quiet veins? Why did the sound of his voice keep echoing along the corridors of my nerves? Why couldn't I forget him, push him out of my mind and lock the door upon him?

A FAINT whimper came from the disused sewing room at the end of the hall where I had made a bed for the absurd, small dog. Otis mustn't hear it. I told myself. He'd be furious.

When we were first married, I had begged him for a pet of some kind . . . a dog, a cat, even a bird to keep me company, but he had frowned and refused to have one in the house. The sort of women who gush over pets were sickening to him, he said. I slipped out of bed and crept in to where the dog lay on a soft, old quilt. He licked my hand when I wiped a cool, wet sponge over his feverish muzzle, and suddenly I sat down on the dusty floor and gathered him into my arms. In the darkness, we comforted one another, the little hurt mongrel and I . . .

In the morning, Otis lowered his copy of the *Times* to say, "I thought I heard a dog yelping somewhere in the house. You'll speak to Martin about it, please. Have him search the cellar. Some stray may have found its way into the place. If he finds it, have him shoot it."

"Yes, Otis," I said quietly, and tilted the tall silver urn above my husband's extended cup.

But after the town car had rolled out of the drive toward town and Otis's offices in Wall Street, I took the little dog and hid him in a safe, warm nest behind some old trunks in the attic. He'd be safe there, I told myself. And when he was well again, I'd make it an excuse to telephone to Barry Conrad . . . just to hear his deep, warm voice once more.

But I didn't have to wait for that! As I went down the wide curving stairs, the telephone rang. It was Barry. "I've got just a split second to talk to you!" he said. "But tell me quickly that you'll have cocktails with me this afternoon . . . at the Plaza at five! I'll be waiting . . ."

"But . . . but . . ." I protested faintly.

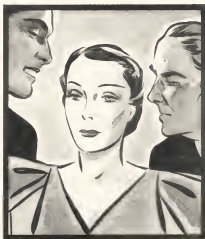
"At five!" he said and rang off.

Up the wide stairs and into my bedroom I whirled in a brief ecstatic dance. Before the open doors of my high, old-fashioned wardrobe, I paused, my eyes wincing back from the few drab gowns which hung there in a solemn, old-ladyish row. Gray crepe; a tan georgette; a navy blue silk; a brown serge suit with a bigie silk blouse; a black satin made with a long full skirt . . . old lady clothes, all of them! Clothes for the wife of Otis Dunn.

Well, I'd go shopping! I'd hurry into town and charge some lovely gay things . . . a happy looking frock or two, a pair of good-looking pumps, a fetching little hat. For so long I had lived in a sort of emotional twilight that now, with the blazing thought of Barry in my mind, I was almost blinded; dizzy and weak with the knowledge that in just a few hours we would be together, he and I.

Oh, how my knees trembled as I passed through the revolving door of the Plaza at five and saw him waiting there for me! He thrust a spray of mottled yellow orchids into my hand and stood smiling down into my eyes, as if we two were alone there in the crowded corridor.

"Anne, you darling, you did come!" he said. "Let's have just a short one here . . . look, I know a place on



Fifty-eighth Street that serves an old-fashioned meal you won't forget . . . let's go there, shall we?"

And before I could answer him, he had propelled me into the fashionably appointed bar. In a daze of happiness and excitement, I drank my cocktail. I don't remember our conversation but I do remember how light-hearted—how gay I felt. I was young again—twenty-one and life was just beginning!

He ordered the taxi to drive around Central Park. "Until I tell you when to stop . . ." he said.

"Yes, sir!" said the driver, and turned his car into the park under the russet and golden arch of the trees.

Barry said, "Smoke?"

I shook my head. "Otis doesn't approve of my smoking," I smiled.

He snapped the case shut and took my hand in his. Casually he stripped off my glove and bending his head, laid his lips lightly against my palm. "You smell of mysterious, subtle flowers . . . flowers that bloom only in the moonlight . . . You're very lovely, you know, Anne."

I pulled my hand away. "I . . . please don't . . . make fun of me."

"Make fun of you? My God! You don't think that I'd . . ." He suddenly framed my face with his fingers and turned my eyes to his. "Listen to me, little idiot! I spent the night walking through the streets with my head scraping against the stars! There wasn't any pavements, or any people, or any traffic lights, or any cops . . . there was only you! I couldn't get you out of my mind for a second. I—I'm mad about you, Anne, don't you know that? Don't try to tell me that there isn't such a thing as love at first sight because I know darned well there is! It's just happened to me. I love you, Anne . . . don't you love me . . . a little . . . too?"

In the blue dusk our lips met and I could find no words to tell him of the joy that surged in my heart. Wordlessly I raised my lips which clung to his.

IT WAS late afternoon before I sped homeward. I was drunk with happiness. He loved me . . . Barry loved me! His kisses were still warm on my lips . . . my lips that hadn't known the feel of kisses ever . . . His words were still sounding in my ears . . . what if he were five years younger than I—what did age matter when one was in love? Besides I looked younger than he—and in experience, I was a child compared to him.

"You'll meet me again tomorrow, won't you, Anne? Oh, I want you so, my dear, my dear . . . Tomorrow . . . please . . . see, take this key and then when I come home, I'll find you there, in that deep chair before my hearth, waiting." He had folded the little key into my hand, kissing my fingers shut over it. "Tomorrow. Oh, Anne, darling, I love you so."

I could scarcely wait for the next day. Every hour that I didn't spend with Barry was an agony of waiting. And then it was five o'clock and we were at our own special cocktail bar. Again we drove through the park but instead of the little restaurant on Fifty-eighth Street, Barry suggested that we go to his apartment.

"I want to show you my diggings, dear. It will be so much cozier to dine there and besides," he added softly as I hesitated, "I have a surprise for you."

His apartment was in a swank apartment hotel on the East Side. I tried to conceal my nervousness as we shot up in the elevator. After all I wasn't a child! And then my apprehension vanished as Barry flung open the door. There, before a cheery fire was set a dinner table and a waiter hovered in the background. But it was the view that caught my eye—an exquisite panorama of New York lay spread beneath the windows.

"Never mind the view," Barry laughed happily at my enthusiasm, "see what I have for you!"

On the table at my place was a box. I opened it with fingers that trembled and lifted out an exquisite brown speckled orchid. And then my fingers felt the hard cold something beneath it and as I drew it forth I gasped for breath. It was an exquisite brooch of diamonds and rubies.

"Oh, Barry," I gasped.

"My sweet," he whispered and oblivious of the waiter, he pressed his lips against mine.

Perhaps a woman of forty should be more sophisticated. But I was like a happy child and I showed it! After dinner, the waiter and the table gone, Barry switched out the lights so that only the firelight and the glow of our cigarettes turned the room into magic. Now, now was my moment of happiness!

And then Barry was on his knees before me, kissing my throat and my hair, his lips searing me like flame. Then, so quickly did he pick me up, and lift me as if I were a featherweight, that I could only gasp, "Barry!" And I was on the wide white divan and he was beside me, his firm hard arms pinioning me down like hands of hot steel.

Oh, the ecstasy of that next hour! His whispered words of love—his hands, hot, tender, caressing. His lips at first soft and gentle until my own were answering flame and then harder, harder, until his teeth gritted against mine—until his weight crushed down my last feeble resistance—until I ceased to think and only felt and then we were swept away into the maelstrom of our passion.

It seemed to me hours later that I opened my heavy eyelids. Waves of remorse were beginning to sweep over me. I, a wife, in the arms of another man! But then I felt Barry's eyes on me and I opened mine to see him smiling tenderly at me.

"Sorry?"

"No, Barry, just happy," I murmured, because I knew that was the answer he wanted.

"My sweet. Will you meet me again tomorrow?"

I wanted to cry, "But where will this lead us, Barry?" But instead I whispered, "Yes."

AND so for a week I lived a lifetime of ecstasy. Each day was perfect. Each hour with Barry was complete. And I knew that my life before then had been only a desolate waste—and in the future? The future was Barry's—Barry's and mine alone!

I don't know how long things would have gone on this way if I hadn't come home late one afternoon and, as I swung up the gloomy driveway, the sound of a shot brought me back from my dreaming. Sharp, incisive, unmistakable, it rang out. Then, as I stepped from the car, my husband's voice grated on the air.

"Throw the beast over the wall into the ditch. Let the county cart it away."

Then Martin's voice, timid and conciliatory. "I—could just as easily bury it back of the stables, sir."

"Damn it, do as I tell you!" cried Otis in a furious voice. "I'll not have my estate turned into a graveyard for mangy strays! And Martin, find out which of the servants had the temerity to hide that filthy beast in my house and discharge her at once."

"Yes, sir."

I strode swiftly over the green turf toward them. Otis took a step toward me. "You're very late," he said.

But I didn't answer him. I couldn't think of anything but that bit of a trusting, hurt little dog. "You've killed him—my little dog! How dared you do a hateful thing like that? He was mine—mine," I cried.

Otis ignored my outburst. "Where have you been?"

His face was close to mine; I could feel his breath on my skin, could catch the faintly musty odor of age that clung to him. He shook my arm angrily, "Answer me!" he commanded as I stared at him in horror.

I flung off his hand and faced him, my breast rising and falling as if I had been running a long hard way. "With my lover!" I half screamed at him. "Do you understand? With my lover! With a man who has tenderness in his heart for small, hurt things. Oh, I'll never forgive you for what you have done to that little defenseless dog."

Suddenly I began to sob; tears welled into my eyes and ran down my cheeks. It was as if the little dog had become a sort of symbol to me and as if, in killing it, Otis had hurt our love, Barry's and mine.

He caught my shoulders in a cruel grip and forced me back against the wall. "Have you gone mad?" he cried. "You talk of a mongrel cur when I demand to know where you spent this afternoon! All these afternoons when you go so mysteriously to town. Come to your senses, Anne! You're talking like a woman in a silly novel! Where have you been? I ask you for the last time."

"And I told you! With my lover. We're going to be married the minute I am free. Yes, I'm leaving you, Otis! Now. This very day! I'm leaving this tomb and I'm going to the man I love."

My husband's face grew slowly ashen. The veins stood out like whiplicks across his forehead. He threw me away from him and stared at me with cold loathing in his pale eyes. "You harlot!" he said at last. "You fool..."

THE study door was blankly closed and locked when, next morning, I left Otis' home. I went empty-handed, except for a little overnight bag, which held a negligee, my handkerchief and a few small bills. On the heavily carved hall table, I laid the key to my husband's house and walked out, into the bright sunshine.

I was going to my lover and my heart felt suddenly light as air, for with the decision to leave Otis, my love for Barry seemed suddenly right and decent!

At a little flower shop near Barry's apartment, I stopped and filled my arms with great coppery chrysanthemums and scarlet maple leaves.

I unlocked Barry's door and closed it behind me. It seemed strange and sweet to be there, alone, waiting for him to come home... sweeter still to realize that now we would never have to say goodbye again! I sang softly as I lit a fire in the grate and arranged the flowers in a great blue bowl. I slipped out of my dress, into the soft, becoming negligee.

In the mirror which I took up from my dresser, I saw my own face and leaned close to study it. Out of its slender oval, my dark eyes looked back at me with shining happiness; my lips that were usually so pale and drooping, were curved and softly red, as if they still held the print of my lover's kisses upon them. A gleam of silver caught my eye; breathlessly I leaned nearer, my eyes suddenly dilated... a gray hair! My first gray hair. I shivered as I plucked the single thread. I mustn't let myself grow old—ever! I couldn't let myself grow old when Barry was so young, so vital.

At five, I heard Barry's key in the lock. I sprang up and ran into his arms. He held me close, kissing me, pressing his lips against my throat. "You darling! It's heaven to find you here, Anne," he whispered. "Come and sit close to me on the sofa and we'll pretend that you've come to stay! We'll forget for one divine hour that when the clock strikes seven, you'll have to put on your things and run away like a little tea-time Cinderella!"

"But I won't," I told him softly.

"You don't mean you can stay later!" Barry's forehead wrinkled in dismay. He took out his cigarette case and for a second the flare of his lighter threw a sharp shadow across his face. "Oh, Anne, why didn't you phone, my dear? I'm terribly sorry but I've made an engagement to dine and play contract afterward. I—I could break it I suppose..."

"No, don't," I said quickly. "You go just as you've planned, because... because we're going to have so many evenings together now. I won't mind sparing just this one!"

He drew away from me abruptly and looked at me with a puzzled frown. "What—what do you mean, Anne?" he asked sharply.

"I've come to stay, Barry! I won't have to go away ever, unless you send me!"

"You... you mean you've left your husband?"

"Yes, Barry, forever! And oh, it's so glorious to be free; to belong only to myself and—and you."

He stood up. "For God's sake, Anne! You... you're joking, surely! You can't mean that you've told him?"

"Why... why, of course I've told him!" I cried. "You expected me to, didn't you, Barry? Because how else could I be free to come to you?"

He whirled on me. "You came many times, didn't you? Well, then..." and when I cried out and covered my face with my hands, he came and sat beside me and tried to take me into his arms. "Listen Anne, we aren't children, you and I. Let's face this thing with common sense..."

"But—but you said you loved me."

"Damn it, I do love you! I'm mad about you. You've got under my skin somehow, with those great dark eyes of yours and that long curved throat... but that doesn't mean that you had to upset the whole apartment all over the place! You could have used some discretion. We could have gone on loving each other quietly, peacefully, without spreading it all over the front page! My Lord, I'll lose my job if your husband yanks me up as correspondent, and then what will happen?"

"We—we'd still have each other," I told him faintly.

He threw back his head and laughed. It was a short, bitter laugh. "God, you talk like a school girl!" he said. "At your age..." He broke off and began to pace up and down the room. Flinging his cigarette into the fireplace, he came and stood before me, his face still dark and cloudy, his lower lip thrust out.

"Look here, Anne, let's not wrangle! Let's forget all this nonsense. We've got this hour anyway. Let's be happy in it!" He dropped to one knee before me, his hands caressing me, his head pressed against my breast. "Anne, little Anne, you are lovely," he said. Gently he was pressing me back among the huge soft pillows of the divan; through the tweed of his coat, I could feel his heart beating swiftly. "Kiss me, Anne! Kiss me!"

Blindly I struggled out of his arms. "No! No! You can't just take me lightly—I thought your love was something deep and permanent! Let me go! Oh, Barry, Barry, how could you spoil our love like that? I thought you loved me as I love you... for always! And always!"

NIGHTFALL found me in a tiny shabby room in a hotel for women, footsore and weary from hours of aimless wandering. I was hungry too, because the armful of chrysanthemums I had bought for Barry's apartment had flattened my little roll of bills alarmingly and, when I gave the hotel clerk the money for my room, I had less than a dollar left. Less than a dollar, and tomorrow staring me in the face! A long string of tomorrows without Barry—for he had let me go. And I had burned all my bridges.

I had a cup of coffee and a stale roll at a drug store counter in the morning and, fortified by the hot drink, set out to look for work. What could I do? Why, almost anything. What experience? None? No, nothing today. I might leave my address and telephone number if I wished.

"Never mind. I—I'll call again." How could I admit to anyone that I had no address at all? "Perhaps you'll have an opening for me later."

"Yeah, maybe."

And, at last, I had exhausted the column I had cut from the "Help Wanted" section that morning, and there was no place else to go. My very bones ached with weariness and the whole world seemed to be swaying dizzily before my eyes. It began to rain. Driven on a chill wind, the gray rain slanted against my thin clothing, until they hung limp and sodden about me. The soles of my slippers were soaked, and my hair clung to my cheeks in damp strands. I was hungry—and in my purse a quarter and four pennies clinked disconsolately. A cheap little coffee shop across the street caught my eye. I'd have a cup of coffee and a doughnut anyway. I decided, or perhaps a bowl of soup. Head bent against the driving rain, I stepped off the curb.

It is curious that even now I can't remember anything about it. I only know that I awoke to find myself in a white cocoon of bandages in a narrow white room filled with a queer sickish smell and the rustle of starched garments and that, standing out sharply against the painted wall, I saw my husband's face.

"Am . . . am I . . . going to . . . to die?" I whispered, but the nurse didn't hear me. I shut my eyes, felt myself drift outward—outward.

"Anne . . ." My husband's voice was hoarse. Through the mists that enveloped me, I could feel him kneeling beside my bed, grasping my limp hands, half shaking me back to consciousness. "Anne, open your eyes."

"Let . . . me . . . go." Desperately I tried to speak aloud, to plead with them all. "I want—to go." But I couldn't hear the words I tried to speak. I turned my face on the pillow—and felt the clouds of gray mist roll over me.

DYING is a strangely beautiful sensation. I know because I died that day. It was death that came to me in those soft gray clouds. I know that now. To let go. To stop struggling. To sink into the bliss of nothingness—what peace! I felt my fingers uncurl, lie lax upon my breast; slowly and more slowly I felt the beat of my lagging heart. And then—Barry Conrad's voice. Calling me. Commanding me.

"Anne, come back! Darling, come back to me. You must! You will! Anne, it's Barry calling you! Come back."

Gray piled clouds rolling slowly back. Torn shreds of mist before my eyes. "Anne, my darling, come back to me. I want you, Anne. I need you so!" Voices all around me, beating against my consciousness. Barry's voice. The grim anxious voice of my husband. The nurse's voice, sharp, authoritative. "This is no place to argue. If you two have anything to say, go out into the waiting room and say it! Well, then . . ." The doctor's voice. "We'll try an injection of strychnine." Then Barry's voice again. "Mr. Dunn, I'll go after we're sure she'll pull through—not before. Anne, open your eyes, dear. It's Barry. Anne!"

WELL, they won, those voices. Barry's most of all. They won. I am getting well. Tomorrow, I am to leave the hospital—but I am not going with Barry, in spite of the letter which has just come by special messenger.

in which he tells me that he is sorry for what happened between us on that dreadful day. "I didn't realize how much you meant to me, Anne . . ." his slanting writing says in bold black lines. "I thought it was just one of those kiss and run affairs, but it wasn't . . . I know that now. Ever since your name leaped out at me from the evening paper on that dreadful day when you were hurt, I have known that I could not lose you. I need you, Anne . . . We'll be married as soon as your husband frees you. I have told him this and he is willing to set the necessary machinery in motion as soon as you are well again. He has been awfully decent about us, I must admit. Your accident seemed to shake him up almost as much as it did me! I think he's fond of you in his dry-as-dust way."

FOND of me . . .

After that first night, when Barry called me back from the peace and quiet of death, he has not come to see me more than once or twice, because he hates the smell of hospitals and besides, the nurse won't let him smoke in my room. His flowers are everywhere, and each morning a messenger brings a letter from him—sometimes just a line or two because he's been so busy the evening before, sometimes a thickly scrawled half dozen pages like the one that came this morning. But thick or thin, letters are cold comfort when I know that if he really cared for me, nothing could keep him away!

He doesn't love me . . . and curiously, I do not care. He has lost the power to hurt me or to make me happy. He was a bright dream, a brief flame; a flashing stone cast into the placid pool of my life. For a little while, he shattered all the calm surface, but now it is quiet once more. Tomorrow I am going home.

With Otis. Day after day he has sat in the hard, uncomfortable chair against the white-painted wall and watched me with anxious, brooding eyes; hour after hour he has read to me, lulling me by the gray monotony of his voice.

He has never reproached me, never spoken of the past, beyond a word or two of sorrow for his harshness to me. And especially his regret at having shot the little dog.

"But I'll get you another pup, Anne," he promised me humbly. "Any kind you like and if you want a pair and want to raise them, I'll get you that."

No father could have been kinder or more tender than he has been to me; no young lover could have smoothed my pillows with a gentler touch. And so I'm going home with him tomorrow. He cried when I told him that. All his gray stern face crumpled and he buried his face in his thin gray hands, and tears wet his fingers and glistened on his skin.

"I'll make you happy, Anne," he promised. "I'd forgotten how to be companionable, but I'll learn. You'll teach me, won't you, my dear? We'll throw open the old house—make new friends. I'll not shut you away from people any longer."

I laid my hand on his bowed head. "I don't want people, Otis," I told him. "We'll be happy together, just you and I. Oh, you've been so good to me since I was hurt. It's taught me how kind you know how to be! I'll be kind to each other, my dear, you and I. I'll make it up to you for—oh for Barry."

He lifted my hand in his and kissed it gently. "There's nothing to make up, little Anne . . ." he told me. "It was a brief time of folly—and now it's over. We—we're too old for folly, you and I."

Too old for folly? Was I?

"I—I suppose we are," I said faintly.

And when he had gone I took Barry's last letter out from beneath my pillow and slowly tore it into shreds.

# As He DESIRED ME

Mystery—passion—tragedy! It all began because a foolish girl thought she could barter her caresses for a career.



**B**EHIND the shelter of the porch vines we nestled, Lew Osborne and I, whispering about the little house we planned to have some day when he had saved enough of his slender salary as a chemist to provide it.

Countless nights we had sat here while the lady-moon peeped in at us, but tonight our plans were different, rosier with the new hopes that quite suddenly had dawned upon us—for tomorrow I would leave this quiet town where I had spent my nineteen years and venture into that great, shimmering world where wealth and fame waited for me as a singer.

How little did I dream of all this two weeks ago when I went with the church quartette, of which I was the soprano, to sing at old Widow Blakely's funeral. A stranger was sitting among the mourners, and I knew he must be Mrs. Blakely's son, prominent in musical circles, who had lived in Europe, and now was back in New York.

At my first high note, his eyes, which had been lowered to the still, old form at our feet, raised to me and clung, and I felt a tingle of excitement at the knowledge that I

could attract attention from this older man of the outside world.

The next day I was giving a music lesson to one of my pupils when another announced that Jim Reed, the church organist, was at the door to see me. Glad of any excuse to dismiss the stupid child, I stepped into the hall to see what Jim wanted.

There, beside him, stood the handsome stranger of yesterday whom Jim introduced as Adam Blakely! I'm afraid I stammered in confusion at this close proximity to a person of such importance.

Jim shifted uneasily as he said: "Yes, Professor, this is Miss June Baker, and she's the best singer this town's got."

Blakely regarded me with level eyes as he bowed over my hand.

"It was a pleasure to hear you sing yesterday, Miss Baker," he said. "I was amazed at the unusual power and beauty of your voice—it is the sort of find we teachers are

constantly looking for. I sought you out to show you what possibilities the future holds for you, and to convince you how wrong it is to keep such talent hidden from the world."

I gasped and flattered for words, but the Professor did his best to put me at my ease. Before I could gather my thoughts we were seated in the parlor; mother, Jim and I, eagerly drinking in all this fascinating stranger had to tell us of how he had made famous singers, and what's more, made them of such as I.

Lew dropped in on his way to the power plant, and remained to listen, too.

"If I could have your daughter for two months this summer," Mr. Blakely said earnestly to mother, "I could tell definitely what sort of singer she would make. A lesson every day under a trained ear like mine, would equal years of ordinary study, and the cost is so small—only a few hundred dollars."

Mother's fingers twisted her apron nervously. "If we only could!" she murmured. "But the money—" Suddenly, Lew's voice broke through the quiet room. "If what you say is true, Professor, I'm willing to put up the money!"

I stared at him. Of course, he meant the six hundred dollars he was saving for our little house.

"No, no, Lew," I cried. "I can't let you take your savings—"

"But your future, June," he pleaded, forgetting the others in his enthusiasm. "You'll be making thousands before long."

"The young man is right," interposed Mrs. Blakely. "The money from your first recital will wipe out your debt to him."

**A**ND so, against my judgment, it had been decided by the two dearest souls on earth, mother and Lew, that I should go to Melody Lodge, Professor Blakely's camp in the mountains, and join his summer class of opera aspirants.

Everything was ready. My new clothes were packed; my railroad ticket and Lew's check for five hundred dollars were tucked in my new handbag, yet suddenly I didn't want to go. Something seemed to be holding me back, some strong premonition of unknown fear.

"Oh, Lew," I whispered on our last night together, "hold me. Don't let me go. I'm afraid."

Lew cradled me in his arms as if I were a baby. In spite of the fact that we were engaged, we had been awfully careful. I had been strictly raised and Lew had been unwilling to arouse desire in me, but cherished our untouched, ripening emotions until that glorious day when I would be his bride.

But tonight was different. There was a new urgency in his kisses as if he wanted to brand me that night as his—his woman! He was willing to let me go

"Adami Adami!" I called frantically, but he didn't answer. What had happened to him? Was he . . . dead? But he couldn't be. Why only a few moments ago he had held me in his arms . . . bruised my lips with his kisses!

and find fame and fortune with my voice for he was as proud of my God-given soprano as I was. But perhaps he thought if by body, as well as my soul, belonged to him, then I would be sure to come back to him.

It needed only my plea, "Hold me, Lew, I'm afraid," to inflame him.

Manlike he sought to give me courage and strength by his love but instead of making me strong, his burning kisses made my knees turn to water. We were alone in the fragrant night. The only sounds, the chirping of crickets and the mysterious sounds of the summer night. The lush fragrance of honeysuckle seemed to overpower us as I gave him kiss for kiss and as my body began to burn. But my heart seemed to sing and I heard glorious voices—my voice—in my own ears as Lew's dear hands caressed my face and throat and my flesh, under the sheer organically dress I wore, tingled under his touch.

"Lew," I whispered once, frightened as I felt myself getting beyond my depths, "Oh, Lew!"

But Lew was like a man possessed. And I could no more stop him than I could stop an equinoctial storm or stop the waves in the sea.

"Sweet, sweet," he whispered as his kisses devoured me. "You're mine, mine—"

I was wax under his hands and as I burned and trembled, my spirit flew out of my body and joined his in a sensation of such rapturous, wild, thrilling joy that I was shaken to the depths of my soul.

I must have slept then for it seemed hours later that I opened my eyes and looked around me. The world must have changed, I thought, but no, it was still moonlight night and the summer sounds were unchanged. On the porch glider, his arms flung around me, Lew was smiling at me. And shaken, ashamed, yet more thrillingly alive than I had ever felt in my life, I snuggled against him, hiding my face in his hair.

"Darling," he whispered, "you're mine now. You're my wife and I know you'll never forget this night as I won't. You'll come back to me." It was more a statement than a question. He was so sure of himself! The conquering male! But even his new domination thrilled me.

"Yes," I murmured, "I'll come back to you."

And then for the second time that night such a premonition of disaster flooded my soul that I was afraid to go.

If only I had known! If only I had obeyed that inner self that urged me to remain here in my safe, familiar surroundings!

Lew looked deep into my eyes, and a little vein pulsed on his temple.

"Sweetheart, if anything should happen to you—but there won't! You'll come back to me the same sweet girl you are now."

His words soothed away my strange foreboding, and soon I forgot my dark fear of the unknown in the swift ecstasy of youthful hope.

"What a wonderful future for us," I thrilled.

"Yours and mine."

For I was certain that as soon as I achieved fame and fortune, I would return and Lew and I would build our home and our life together would be broadened and enriched by my career.

Such are the dreams of a youth—

**M**ELODY LODGE was a long, rambling house overlooking one of these clear mountain lakes so numerous in the North.

On my arrival I met Professor Blackely and his wife, a strange, beautiful woman whose wide, grey eyes stared ever so slightly, as if at some secret terror she feared. She was to remain a stranger, for in the days that

followed we seldom saw her.

There were seven other girls beside myself, and we had attractive rooms on the second floor, while the studio and living quarters and the Blackely's apartment occupied the first. In the basement, which opened almost onto the water, was the maid's room, a dressing-room for our use after swimming, and a large store-room containing fishing paraphernalia, washtubs, a rack for drying bathing suits, and various other objects which would not grace the beautiful rooms above.

We practiced in a small building nearby, a combination garage and boat-house, where a battered upright piano stood on a foundation above the motor-boat and canoe.

All in all, it was an ideal place for artistic work, and I thrilled at the thought of spending two months there among sophisticated people, so different from any I had ever known.

True to Professor Blackely's prediction, my voice took on new beauty under his direction. He carefully superintended each tone, each exercise and sang I attempted during the daily lessons, and often when I was alone in the boat-house practising, I knew he was somewhere nearby, listening to my efforts. My voice gained in power as I learned to control it with the prescribed diaphragm breathing.

She wanted to be an opera singer! She found that for every rung on the ladder to fame she had to sacrifice her ideals, and pay the piper—not only with her soul—but with her body too!

"Place your hands so," he would instruct me, setting the example by doing it himself. "Can't you feel the muscles of your diaphragm contract and expand? No, that is not just right. Permit me—"

Coming over to where I stood before a long mirror, he would place his hands, one on my back, the other just above my stomach where the ribs bowed away to the side. "Now breathe! You're learning fast, child! Mercy, what a chest you have—a true opera singer's physique."



His hands lingered over my shoulders, and my full bosom, giving me a strange, breathless sensation. His eyes fastened like stinging points to my body.

Then he was back at the piano, impersonal, intent on the music and my tone production.

We did not work all the time. An hour and a half a day is enough to exercise a voice in training. Afternoons, we took a hike somewhere, or swam in the lake.

I had not thought to learn a bathing suit, but there was one left by someone from the summer before, and I used it.

Before long, I thought nothing of appearing three-quarters naked before Professor Blackely who was wonderful in a bathing suit, so strong and thoroughly masculine. We all looked forward to the afternoons when we forgot our rigid singing routine and tumbled and dove in the sun-warmed lake, or lay relaxed on the white beach.

One unusually warm day, we had left our bath-tubs in the basement dressing-room as usual, and had run down to the water's edge.

"What a relief!" exclaimed Lois, one of the more advanced students. "Adam's not going to be here today."

"Where'd he go?" asked Ruth, a mischievous little soprano whom I liked best.

"Had to take his wife to the doctor's," answered Lois, stepping onto the diving board.

"Hooray! Then me for a suntan. I've been dying for a chance like this!" squealed Ruth, and in an instant she had unbuttoned her bathing suit and slipped it down to her waist. "Can't do this when he's hanging around all the time."

Her daring action took my breath away, then I watched the other girls following her example.

"I've a good notion to take the darn thing clear off," said Lois. "There's no one at the house but the maid, and I don't care if she sees me."

And in an instant she was nude, her lovely body glowing in the sun. After a moment's hesitation I too unfastened the single button on my shoulder and slipped out of the bathing suit.

It was heavenly! We lay on the sand gossiping about the stars of the musical world, discussing our own ambitions, all the while our young bodies were absorbing those health-giving rays direct from the sun.

Presently, one by one, the girls slipped off to the dressing-room until I was alone. How delicious it was to lie there, like a primitive woman, like Eve. And Adam—the name suddenly brought the quick color to my cheeks as I hastily put the thought from me and gave myself up rapturously to the caresses of the sun, dreaming of sweet nights to come when I should hold audiences spell-bound by my singing. Lying like this I would not let myself think of Lew—for even yet I could feel a tingling in my blood when I relived that wondrous last night Lew and I had spent together.

How long I lay there I do not know, but suddenly I realized it must be getting late. I jumped up, scrambled into my suit and ran to the deserted basement. To save time I hung my limp suit with the others on the rack, and turned to make a dash for the dressing-room.

Then I almost screamed in surprise and shame, for there in the doorway through which I had just come, stood Professor Blackely!

For one long instant I stood, absolutely powerless to move a muscle while his narrowed eyes moved inch by inch over my cowering body. Then he was gone and I crept weakly into the dressing-room and locked the door, covering my burning face with icy hands.

How terrible! How ghastly! I would have to leave Melody Lodge at once. Never could I face him after that.

But by the time I had changed my bathrobe tightly about me and dashed up to my room, I had reasoned the thing out with myself.

"Nothing but an accident! As act as if it had never happened," advised my judgment.

**T**HE Blackelys were dining out that evening, and we had the place to ourselves, for which I was tremendously thankful. After a few rubbers of bridge we all retired early.

Sometime in the night I awakened with a start, and lay there shivering. I was cold with a peculiar dread. What had wakened me?

Suddenly from somewhere below, a shriek pierced the air, and then, to my horror, I heard my doorknob creak, as if it had sprung back to place from a hand that had just released it.

For long minutes, I lay there shuddering. Someone had certainly been at my door.

"Ah-ah!" The weird shriek came again, rising and falling in uncanny horror.

Like a flash I was out of bed, streaking into the hall where the other girls were already huddled in a silent group.

"What is it?" I whispered, weak with fear.

Suddenly from the dark lower hall, we heard our instructor's reassuring voice.

"Go back to bed, girls, it is nothing. My wife has had a nightmare, that is all."

Mute with surprised shock, we crept back to bed, and Ruth came with me. We huddled there together, trying to guess what had really caused those screams, for we both doubted that a nightmare could have been the reason.

"Do you know why Mrs. Blakely avoids us so?" Ruth asked me.

"No—why is it?" my eyes were round with scared curiosity.

"Well, I'll tell you. It's because she's going blind, and she's very sensitive about it. She's nervous, and awfully jealous of Adam. Last summer there was a girl here he had a desperate crush on, Sari Achta, a foreigner, and as hot and wild as they come. We girls always suspected that he visited her at night, but, of course, we had no actual proof of it, and anyway we're here for vocal training. You learn to overlook a lot of things when you're fighting for front ranks."

Cold perspiration bathed my body as I remembered the certain sensation I had had when I was awakened that my door knob was moving.

What should I do? I would write Lew the very next morning that I was coming home—but that wasn't fair to him nor mother! I had to make good for their sakes. I must hold a grip on myself, learn to fight my own battles and keep "my eye on the ball." That's what Ruth had meant—"overlook lots of things"—but why had Mrs. Blakely screamed?

**D**URING my lesson that morning, Professor Blakely scarcely looked at me as he sounded the chords for my exercises. It was as if some mysterious veil had been drawn between us, shutting out the pleasant friendship and warm personal interest that had heretofore been between us.

I forgot my moment of shame yesterday, the silly fears of last night in a quick rush of sympathy for this man—brilliant, famous, yet craving for love and companionship, and tied for life to a woman whose affliction had made her unreasonable and selfish.

"Let's try this over at sight," he produced Mimi's aria from La Boheme.

"Splendid!" he cried, a few minutes later, after I had concluded the haunting melody. "You know the opera, of course?"

Laughingly I shook my head. "Where in my town could I ever have seen opera?"

"That's true." His unhappy mood was beginning to melt. "If you're going to do this lovely thing, we'll have to introduce you to Mimi, so you can feel what you're singing. Let's see—suppose we skip off this afternoon, away from everybody, and study this opera undisturbed."

I promised to be at the boat-house immediately after lunch while everyone else was waiting for the mail, then no one would miss us and have occasion to gossip.

**A**N HOUR later, before Professor Blakely had time to join me, I was at the practice piano, alone, trying to become familiar with the song before we went over it together. I sang it softly at first, then gradually let my voice swell voluptuously on the delicious climax. How gorgeous, how utterly lovely it was!

"Rotten!" A hoarse, guttural croak from behind made me stiffen in surprise.

Whirling around, I saw standing there a woman who might be young but for the black eyes burning in a white face prematurely drawn by some strange affliction.

"Rotten!" she repeated, and her voice was as hoarse as a man's who has a bad cold. "You sing that as if it were a lullaby, or a swing dance—anything but what it is; a cry of anguish. You've got to sweat over it, put some guts into it, if you've got any."

"Who are you?" I demanded. "And how did you get in here?"

The woman grinned wickedly. "Oh, that's easy. I've spent enough time and money at this fool lodge to know how to sneak in here from the water side. Who am I? I'm Sari Achta, if that means anything to you!"

"But what are you doing here? Do you want to see Professor Blakely?"

She sneered. "You bet I do. I want him to see how my voice has improved on the South American tour he insisted I take—"

A spasm of pain twisted her face, and her quick hand flew to her throat.

I was frightened at her grimace of pain. "What is it? Can I help you?"

She thrust me roughly aside.

"No, I'm all right. Leave me alone."

She stooped and picked up a wooden box I had not noticed before. "A little gift for Adam. It's a memento for him from South America. I'll wait and give it to him personally." And without another word she was gone from the place.

How awful she was! And what a voice! Perhaps she had a bad cold, contracted on her tour and had had to cancel her concerts. It was enough to make any singer despair, but this fiery creature looked murderous! But I forgot her as Professor Blakely came striding into the boat-house and we took one of the boats and paddled out on the lake.

**"H**OW lovely the shadows are on the water," I exclaimed as the canoe drifted silently toward a little sheltered cove.

"Yes, it's heavenly," Adam agreed. "This looks like a good place to land, right here."

He helped me carefully onto the grassy bank, then secured the canoe to a sapling that overhung the dear lake. "Now for Mimi."

For the next half hour he explained the theme to me, acquainting me with the cast of characters, and describing the traditional costumes.

"How thrilling it must be to sing in opera," I sighed.

"But of course, and there's no reason why you can't do it, you dear little bird. You have the voice, gloriously, and the physique—"

His fingers touched my throat impersonally as if to pay homage to the priceless gift I had there, then played slowly, caressingly over my shoulders.

"Divine," he breathed, and I felt that curious tingling over me—half fright, half fascination—more intensely this time. "You are like a daughter to me, June, the daughter I wanted so dearly."

I was surprised to see tears in his eyes. How could anyone malign him? He was a disappointed man, trying to help others to succeed.

"I'll be a daughter to you," I said softly, slipping my hand into his.

"You darling!" He leaned over and kissed my cheek. "Thank you for that. You must never doubt me, nor mistrust me. I'm going to make you famous. But to do that, you mustn't be afraid to live—" He looked at me keenly.

"What do you mean?" I hesitated uncertainly as a blush suffused my cheeks. "Was it possible he suspected what had happened between Lew and me?"

"My dear, there's as much difference in your voice this way," he lifted my hand to his lips, "and this, if you've learned to live—"

Suddenly he had me in his arms, smothering me with scorching kisses as he strained me to him. Then, before I could think or protest, he had set me free, panting there on the grass in sudden weakness.

"You see, there's a difference, and there'll be just that much difference in your voice, after you've learned more about life," he said significantly.

that left me faint, giddy with an answering hunger yet I was repelled too by the brutality of this man who, I knew instinctively, would take me without qualms—with less restraint than he would crush an offending mosquito.

With a sudden rough movement of my whole body I tore myself away from him.

"Take me back," I cried hoarsely. "I don't want your kind of love. I'm in love with another man. I'm going to marry him. Do you hear? I don't want you! I hate you!"

"Marvelous," Adam cried exultantly. "You're acting superbly. You'll be a great actress, as well as a singer, June. Can't you see, this is only part of your training?"

For a moment I stared at him in confusion. My mind was a whirlwind of doubt and uncertainty. But I was clever enough to see that if I pretended I realized he was just goading me on to make an actress of me, it would be a respite for the moment and from then on I must see that I did not give him the opportunity of making love to me—and that I must keep out of his way.

## RIGHT WAY TO HOLD YOUR MAN!



1. Be affectionate and demonstrative.
2. Show him that you're glad to see him without gushing over him.
3. Don't take the initiative, especially in love-making. Men like to beg for kisses like puppies for a bone!
4. Don't give too much—always hold some *better*, more enticing favor dangling over his head. This is the best way to make him come back for more.
5. When you do kiss him, put your heart and soul in it!

I was trembling, shaking, for I knew more about love than Professor Blakely thought I did! I knew what he meant by "living." For I had known the ecstasy of love with the man I was going to marry! Yet why had I quivered and trembled beneath Adam Blakely's kisses, too?

Dear God, was I had? Was I a bad woman who could respond to any man's caresses? No, no. I loved Lew—but did I love Adam Blakely too? Was it possible to love two men? In confusion and terror I covered my face with my hands.

Ruthlessly, masterfully, Adam forced my hands down, pinioned them against my sides so that my flaming face was just below his.

"Ah," he laughed softly, "something has happened to you! You are beginning to feel. You will soon know the heaven and hell of love—and I will teach you. My June, my Diane, my exquisite, lovely girl—" And before I could speak, his heavy lips crushed mine. Hard, fierce, demanding. Here was none of the love and tenderness that Lew had given. Here was only a demanding—a burning *desire*

I tried to force a laugh. "Well, Professor Blakely, it was pretty realistic training, but I'm game! I'll be an actress if it kills me. But I'm tired now. We'd better go back."

His eyes seemed to undress me as he helped me back in the canoe. At every opportunity, he touched me—my arm, my limbs, my slim ankles. I knew then that Adam Blakely was a dangerous man but a good teacher. I made up my mind I'd learn all I could but that I'd be on my guard from this moment on. For in spite of my protestations of hatred, I was attracted to him like a bird is attracted to a snake—I was hypnotized by his power over my body, even though my soul and my mind revolted!

THE next morning during my practice hour when I was alone in the boat-house I had another call from Sari Achta, and this time she was a pleading, groveling creature worse, if possible, than her other, fierce self.

"Don't stay here," she mumbled. "You'll lose your youth and illusions as I did."

"But my voice," I protested, trying to shake off the shadow of dread she cast over me. "I'm going to sing in opera."

"Your voice is lovely," she admitted. "And if you've got thousands of dollars and aren't afraid to take insults and worse from anybody; if you have a cast iron constitution and are willing to pay for favors, no matter how small, you may get there. But there are so many others like you—you'll be happier to drop it now. Go back home and get married. If I only had—"

Suddenly she sprang to her feet and came over to where I sat at the piano.

"I like you," she croaked pathetically. "You're a sweet kid and I'd like to do something for you. You'd better give this up before you wish you had!"

"Why should I give it up? Because it's been too much for you is no proof I'll succumb," I answered coolly. "Besides I'm enjoying it and doing splendidly."

"Sure of yourself, aren't you? Just like I was. Listen. If you ever want to leave here in a hurry, get on the train and come to New York. Here's my address—"

She tore a corner from a sheet of music and scribbled a street number on it. "Just in case you need it, of course."

Slowly, as in great pain, she crept from the boat-house and disappeared through the trees.

What did I want with her address? Impatiently I thrust it into my blouse pocket. Probably some neurotic and disillusioned singer. I felt sorry for her. Perhaps she was one of those whom Adam had taught—too well! I shrugged then. It was no affair of mine—and went on with my work.

THAT night we had a guest for dinner—a New York music critic—and the maid brought us word as we were resting before the evening meal that Professor Blakely wanted us to dress and that we would dine formally at seven instead of informally as we usually did at six.

Ruth, who was waving her hair in the mirror with lotion and a thin comb, grimaced. "Oh, Lord, do you know what this means, June? We're on exhibition for a few hours and then we'll have to sing. You'll probably be called on, dearie, for you're teacher's pet!" Then seeing my flush she hastened to add, "Sorry, June, I'm a cat. I didn't mean to say that. But you have got the best voice in the place," she added generously.

I dressed myself in my one and only evening dress—a lovely flame-colored velvet dress that was cut daintily low in back and which clung to my ripe young body like a glove. If Adam Blakely wanted to "show off" with me—all right, I'd play up! A New York music critic might be the very wedge I needed to get in and once I did, I resolved, I'd steer clear of Adam Blakely and his queer, unnerving effect on me.

Dinner was gay. The New York critic was young and attractive and witty and I was curiously keyed up. But to our disappointment, he announced that he had to make an early train back. So there was to be no concert, after all. He left at about nine and Blakely drove him to the train. The other girls, tired after our strenuous day, took off their evening dresses and prepared to retire.

But I couldn't go to sleep. I was nervous and tingling in every limb. A curious excitement pervaded my entire being and I decided to walk out in the moonlight and see if I could walk myself into some semblance of calm and serenity. I hated, too, to take off my lovely dress. I so seldom had a chance to wear it!

So with my velvet gown sweeping the dew-drenched grass, I ran lightly down to the lake-front and sat down on a huge boulder almost in the path of the moon's ray. And

as I sat there, some of the serenity of the night flooded my soul.

I was about to retrace my steps when I was suddenly caught in an embrace that was like a vise of steel. I turned my head swiftly and in the moonlight I saw Adam's face behind my shoulder.

"Oh, June, you are lovely," he breathed against my bare back, his breath scorching my skin. "I saw you in the moonlight, so young, so unspoiled, so—so tempting," his lips made a path down my back and before I could tear myself away—for that awful numbing sensation was gripping my knees—he had lifted me in his arms and had buried his head under the soft neckline of my revealing dress.

"Adam, stop," I panted, "let me go—"

And then his hot, seeking lips found my mouth, crushing out my breath, crushing down my protests, cutting off my low cry. Under his practiced hands, my traitorous body burned—my lips responded to the fire in his even while my mind fought bitterly against his possession of me, his domination of my soul.

I was paralyzed with responsive desire as powerful as his and there was no turning back. My will was weaker than his and as his lips drew every drop of blood in me to the surface, I felt myself melt in his embrace in a passion as mad—as demanding as his own.

I don't know what would have happened but suddenly from somewhere there in the shadows, came a weird sound, like a hoarse, croaking laugh. I stiffened with fear, and pushed Adam away. He heard it too, and looked up.

"What's that?" he whispered.

"It sounds like a queer person who's been hanging around lately," I gasped. "Her name is Sari Achta!"

At my words, he sprang to his feet in a flash.

"Let's get out of here." His voice was staccato with sudden fright. I was only too glad to break the spell that had me in its grip and as we sped to the shelter of the boat-house I tried to smooth my disheveled hair and my crushed dress.

"But she's in South America," he panted as he ran towards the house.

Then I told him about the woman and all she had said, and as I went on I was amazed at the greenish pallor that spread over his face.

"Go back to the lodge at once," he said thickly, all the madness of the moonlight gone from his voice, "and be quiet about it."

Like a noiseless shadow I flew over the lawn, through the basement, and then, after removing my pumps, I ran upstairs. At last, after what seemed hours of holding my breath lest I step on a creaking stair, I reached my room.

But I couldn't undress. My nerveless fingers couldn't unfasten the hooks. I knelt down by my window, shivering in the moonlight at my narrow escape and frozen with the dread thought that that awful woman had witnessed Adam's frenzied love-making. I was grateful that she had saved me, not only from him but from myself, too, but I cringed with humiliation and embarrassment. How much had she seen?

Suddenly the night was torn with a wild scream that came from the floor below. I heard the girls scurrying down the hall.

I did not join them but huddled under the window seat, shuddering over my narrow escape. I had not reached my room a moment too soon. What if the girls had come to look for me and found my room empty?

Gradually the wails died down to a sob, then ceased altogether. But the silence was even more terrible than the screaming until once again wild wails rent the air. Blood-curdling, fiendish wails that came from a soul in horror turned my blood to ice-water. Now the hall was full of

screaming girls and I could ignore the bedlam no longer. Besides the suspense, not knowing what had happened, was worse than laying low and making believe I was asleep.

Forgetful of the fact that I still wore my evening dress, I rushed out of my room to the end of the corridor where the girls were milling about in terror. Mrs. Blakely, her hair streaming, her sightless eyes glaring in her head stood at the foot of the stairs, shrieking, utterly beside herself with hysterics.

"What's happened," I cried.

Mrs. Blakely kept up her insane shrieking and the other girls were too frightened to speak. They kept pointing to the studio which was bathed in the eerie moonlight. Without a thought of danger, I brushed past the shrieking girls. There in the moonlight, as bright as day almost, I saw Adam, still in his evening clothes lying on a divan. On the floor beside him I recognized immediately the wooden box Sari had brought for him. At first I thought he had fainted and I called his name.

Then my blood seemed to freeze as I shrank back in sheer terror. He didn't answer and a nameless dread whispered that something very terrible had happened here.

"He's dead!" Ruth, who had come up behind me, gasped. The rest covered back against the door, too terrified to speak. Mrs. Blakely had stopped shrieking and advanced sightlessly into the room like some terrible spectre. She groped until she found his hand. A long moment of tenseness, then again she began to shriek. But the maid had sent for a doctor and he alone quieted her with a sedative.

THE days that followed were confused nightmares of unreality. The Lodge was filled with strange people poking into everything, regarding us girls suspiciously and questioning us until we were dizzy.

Mrs. Blakely was prostrated and under the care of a nurse. All the gay, singing voices were hushed now, and we sat huddled together in one or another of our rooms upstairs, trying to unravel the mystery of who murdered Adam Blakely—for murder it was, even though the coroner seemed to have arrived nowhere. It did occur to us that he may have been keeping back what he had discovered at the autopsy, and saving it to piece together with additional information he was searching.

While the horrible hours dragged on, I wondered how Adam had found that box of Sari's? How had he died? Had Mrs. Blakely murdered him in her jealousy? Had Sari killed him? But there had been no gun shot, no signs of violence in the studio.

An impersonal funeral service was performed over the still body that had so recently pulsed with virile manhood, while groups of reporters and curiosity seekers crowded outside.

THERE was nothing to keep us there longer. The authorities knew we had had nothing to do with the crime, and they permitted us to leave. Already the other girls, unwilling to lose a moment on the way to success, had arranged for immediate training with other teachers. But I was too confused to go on.

Mother wired frantically for me to come home. Lew had been too busy with his work to come to me, and I could never have faced him here in this spot where I had so nearly betrayed his love. My only thought now was to get home where I could hide, and then resume the weary routine of piano lessons and pay back Lew's money. Beyond that I couldn't think.

All the way to New York I kept living over Adam's last night on earth. What had happened in those dark minutes after I had left him?

During the inquest I had kept quiet about Sari's visit to

me. No need to drag her into this mess. Besides, I was afraid if I involved her, she would retaliate by exposing the love-making between Adam and me which she had witnessed on the beach and I would rather die than have my name smeared all over the front pages as having been intimate with Adam Blakely. How could I explain to Lew? Could I say that Adam had forced himself on me? Had Sari seen my response in his arms?

I had seen nothing of Sari Achta during the hectic days after Adam's death.

Suddenly a memory flashed into my mind—the address she had thrust on me "In case you need it." Where was it?

Sure enough, the scrap of paper was still in my blouse pocket, and I transferred it to my handbag. I would get a taxi to take me to the address in New York before I boarded a train for home.

A FROWSY landlady answered my inquiry. "Yes, she's in, but ye can't stay but a minute. The doctor don't want no one to see her."

Up two flights of dirty stairs I mounted, and into a room as directed. Then I caught my breath in surprise.

There on a low cot lay Sari, but how wasted, how changed in the short time since I had seen her.

"So you came." Her voice was a horrible croak. "I knew you would."

"You're ill!" I cried. "I wanted to shrink from this terrible creature, but something, perhaps pity, drew me to her side. I drew a chair to the side of the bed and sat down fearfully."

"Now that's better," the hoarse whisper went on. "If the doctor catches me talking, out you go, although it's useless now. You see, I've got tuberculosis of the throat."

I shrank away, clutching my own throat in horror.

"—Adam should have known I wasn't fit to sing but he flattered me, took my money. I was crazy about him, and when Mrs. Blakely found his bed empty and knew he was with me, you'd have thought she was being murdered she screamed so— He got tired of me, sent me off on a tour he arranged in South America. The day I arrived, I lost my voice. I learned I would never sing again—that my training had aggravated my condition. My only desire was to get back before I died and hurt that devil. He ruined me—I'm glad he's dead."

The poor creature panted in exhaustion and I urged her to rest, but after a moment she went on.

"Go home, child, let someone harder than you gamble for success—you're too soft, you're made for love—your voice is too beautiful to bargain with greed and lust—save it for your babies—crooning lullabies are better than opera—I'll never have either—maybe after I'm gone, I can cuddle a little spirit baby—maybe I can sing—over yonder—"

For a dreadful moment, I thought she was dead, then she turned her head to me and her features were convulsed with loathing and agony.

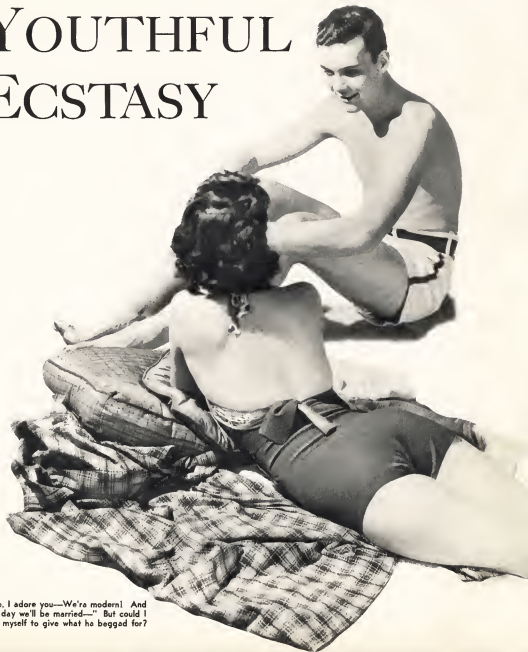
"He's gone—I brought him a little souvenir from my trip—a snake from South America—poisonous—when he lifted the lid it struck."

Her voice died away.

In a daze I left her, too horrified to tell her secret. But I didn't have to because by the time I reached home it was in all the papers. The doctor had had her sign a confession before she died.

LEW'S arms were waiting for me when I got home and into them I crept. My ambitions for a career were over. All I wanted was the haven of his love and to forget how close I came to sacrificing myself and our love for anything as ephemeral as a career.

# To Him It Was Only YOUTHFUL ECSTASY



"Janie, I adore you—We're modern! And some day we'll be married—" But could I bring myself to give what he begged for?

IT WAS May, a cold, miserable, rain-washed night that was black with lowering clouds. Inside the house, three men and a woman were crowded into the living room, strained white faces staring blankly at me—a cowering girl huddled beside the open fire—Gone was my sophistication, my pride in being modern, and smart, and able to take care of myself.

I didn't realize it then but the situation I was in, was as old as civilization. I had played around. I had grasped at love too eagerly and I was caught.

"Janie!" Father spoke through twisted lips. "Jane, once and for all, will you stand up and—"

"No!" The word was a husky whisper that tore at my aching throat, and I felt my burning eyes dart to the face of the boy on the other side of the chimney. "No," I repeated. "I won't! Nothing on earth can make me marry him now! He's mean, and wicked, and a liar, and my child will be better off with no father than to be burdened with Clem Whaler's name! I don't care whether he makes an honest woman of me or not! I won't marry him! I wouldn't marry him if he were the last man on earth! Now, go—all of you—and let me alone!"

"My child," Reverend Cassel spoke softly and he touched my shoulder gently, "my child, bitterness and hatred will get you no where. You owe it to your unborn child to give him a name. The boy

is willing to make amends. Can you not forgive?" "Be sensible!" Father interrupted our minister with a hoarse command. "Clem's willing now to do the right thing. You'll need the protection of his name, and you're going to marry him tonight, or, by heaven, you'll get out of my house. It's bad enough for you to have sunk so low to give yourself before marriage, but you're going to clear our good name—or get out. . . ."

I heard mother's breath come in a quick-drawn gasp, and her eyes begged me silently to obey my father's wish, but looking at Clem Whaler, I knew that all the love I had ever felt for him was dead. To marry him would be a greater sin than giving him my love without benefit of marriage.

I reached up and pushed the Reverend Cassel's hand off my shoulder. I pulled myself to my feet, my finger pointing almost under Clem's nose.

"Marry you? Never! Six months ago, a week ago, I'd have sold half my immortal soul to hear you say you'd marry me, but tonight I wouldn't have you if you had the wealth of the world in your hands."

"I loved you! I thought you loved me, and I listened to all your rotten promises that you never meant to keep! I was glad, proud that you had chosen me to love! And then—this! You knew that, too! I told you and I thought you'd be glad and want to marry me. But you didn't! You offered me — money! You craven, weak coward! You offered me money to murder my unborn

baby. And now when you're on the spot, you'll go through a worthless ceremony. Well, I'll die first!"

"I wouldn't even have told you the man was who 'ruined me' but dad found a letter I started to write you, and he thought he could force you to marry me. Well, I don't want you! I don't want my child to have a father who is a coward and a liar. No, I tell you, I won't marry you! Not now—or ever!"

I stopped with a gasping sob, anger and rage making me suddenly weak, and my father pointed toward the door with a trembling finger.

"All right, you've always felt you were smarter than life; you thought because you got a job and graduated from high school that there's nothing you can't do—I've been too easy with you, but this is the end: You have cut yourself off from me, and you are no longer my daughter. I hope I need never look on your face again!"

For an instant my heart stood still. "You mean—now? Tonight?" I crept closer to him and tried to touch his hand. "Dad, can't you see that I *can't* marry him?"

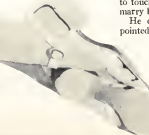
He did not seem to hear me. One thin hand pointed toward the door. "Get out before I forget myself and give you the hiding you deserve."

Then, with a quick movement, he grasped Clem Whaler by the collar and shook him back and forth in a burst of sudden rage.

"Damn you," he shouted, "I'd like to kill you! You're as much to



Once I yielded, there was no turning back. I thought by giving our love full sway, I was protecting and strengthening it!



They wanted love the "modern" way.

No ties—no responsibilities—just thrills! Then she learned that the law of life heeds no man-made codes—

blame as she is. And all I can do is kick you out!"

There was a scuffling of feet, and, in another instant, Clem slid through the door, across the porch, and lay in an awkward heap at the bottom of the steps.

I watched, in a sudden paralysis of fear, while he picked himself up slowly and brushed the mud from his clothes. For just an instant I almost pitied him because he looked so beaten and old and hopeless. . . .

I REMEMBERED another night, a night almost a year before, when Clem had held me in his arms on the soft, still sun-warmed sand beside the ocean that was calm as a lake where we had wandered hand in hand along the beach to watch the moon's rays on the water, and whispered his love and longing for me. "Janie," he had said, "you know we can't get married but why can't we love each other? It's agony holding you in my arms, wanting you with every ounce of my blood and you're holding back. Why, Janie? I adore you. You love me. I thought we were modern, up-to-date. What the harm?"

But his words couldn't convince me, for with all our modern code, I couldn't give myself to him. . . . But suddenly Clem stopped talking and pressed his mouth against mine the while his hands caressed my shoulders, my neck—holding me closer, yet closer until our breath and our heartbeats were as one. In that moment I ceased to think; all my inhibitions and repressions melted beneath the fire of his caresses and I was gripped by such a terrible need for him and his kisses that I was powerless with a desire greater than logic or reason. How to describe the glory, the soul-shaking beauty of that moment when our hearts seemed to leave our bodies and our spirits mingled and were one—

Of course I was frightened and shaken afterwards but Clem assured me that we were only doing what all modern young people did when they were

in love and when circumstances prevented them from marrying. And I, fool that I was, listened and believed and trusted him—

Thus had I given myself as countless others have given since the world began; as woman will go on giving until the end of time.

Weak? Yes, I know, and foolish, but once I yielded to Clem there was no turning back and I thought that by giving our love full sway, I was protecting and strengthening it!

Days sped by on winged feet. We spent golden hours at the beach near our house hasking in the sun and in our love.

Then, little by little, I saw Clem changing. It was nothing he said, but I sensed a subtle something that was in his eyes, his voice. I wondered dully what I had done to hurt him, to displease him, and there were times when I tried to talk to him about it, but somehow no words would come.

Soon I realized hopelessly that all my love could not

hold Clem to me. All his talk of love had been pretense. Nothing had been true. He had taken my gift of love, squeezed it dry of sweetness and beauty, and now he was tired of it. He was tired of me. And oh, he mustn't be tired of me! It wasn't only that we had taken love carelessly, but there was something else, a bigger reason why he must not forget.

I tried so hard to keep my voice steady and my eyes dry when I told him.

"Don't you see, Clem, it's got to be different now? We can't wait for your father to be reasonable. Oh, darling, I'll work, and I'll not mind anything as long as we can be together. I'll—"

"Jane!" His voice was cross. "Jane, I—don't see why—"

"But you've got to see," I told him. "You've got to understand!"

"I understand that you're making things awfully hard for me, Jane." He threw himself on the sand, face downward. "Oh, Jane, don't you see that my career will be ruined? Father will cut me off without a cent, and mother has planned—"

I watched him for a moment in stunned silence, and, for the first time, I saw the weakness of his chin, the shallow, careless eyes that were narrowed now to thin little slits of worry. His worry was for himself, not for me. He was thinking of what this thing would mean to him! What it would mean to my life, what it would cost that little life that must come into being, did not concern him. He didn't want to marry me. He was tired of me.

"Dad," I cried aghast, "do you think I want a shotgun marriage? You can't make me marry him!"



"You mean," I said slowly, "you don't care at all?"

He sat up suddenly and caught my hand. "I tell you, Jane, I'll stand by, and I'll help you out with money—I know a good doctor right in this town. He's helped a lot of girls in trouble and he's reasonable, too—"

I looked at him for an instant, and then I laughed—high, shrill laughter that held no hint of mirth. Then I turned suddenly and ran down the sandy beach; ran as if all the fiends of torment were behind me.

THAT night I tried to write Clem a letter, a little note that told him he need not worry; that never, never would I call on him for help. Into that note I put some of the dammed-up bitterness in my heart, and my father who had suspected something was wrong with me, suddenly got up from the chair where he was reading and stalked over to the desk where I was writing. I didn't see him until he was almost at my elbow and before I could cover up the sheet of paper on which I was writing, he snatched it from me.

"There's something wrong with you, Jane. What is it?"

And before I could stop him, he was reading that burning accusing note.

Across the desk his eyes met mine in a burning, horrified look, and his big hand doubled into a tight fist.

"Jane, who is the man?"

I shook my head dully. "Does it matter, Dad? I never want to see him again. I wish I were dead!"

"Jane," he repeated, "who is the man?"

My eyes darted about the room, seeking a means of escape, but mother sat tensely in her chair watching me with pain-wracked eyes. I could see from her face that she and Dad had suspected something and that they had planned to trap me into telling what was wrong with me. And I had thought my condition was unnoticeable. I slid off my chair slowly and backed against the wall, feeling my way toward the door. There was something in my father's face that frightened me and I felt my heart beating madly in my throat.

"Jane! Who—is—the—man?" He reached over and grasped my shoulder so that I winced with pain. "Jane, is it Clem Whaler?"

I threw up my hand to hide my face, while dad's fingers dug into my shoulders. "If it's Clem, he'll marry you tonight, or by God, I'll treat him like the dog he is and make him marry you at the point of a gun—"

"No!" I faced my father proudly. "Do you think I want a shotgun marriage? Do you think I'd promise to love and honor a man who was forced to marry me? You can't make me marry him! I won't!"

He pushed me aside and got his hat and coat. "I'll be back," he said shortly.

"Dad," I panted, "if you disgrace me I'll kill myself."

My father's face was dark with scorn. "And what about the disgrace you've brought on mother and me, you . . . you wait . . ." I burst into hysterical sobs but mother only sat and stared but finally as sobs shook me, she came and took my hand—her own eyes wet.

"Don't cry, Jane. Dad is right. You'll be married and in time we can forget this shame . . ."

I let her talk and dried my eyes. My mind was made up.

AN HOUR later there was the sound of feet scraping about on the porch, husky whispers, and mother opened the door to admit Reverend Cassel, my father and Clem, who eyed me in sullen silence.

"You're wasting time," I told my father slowly. "I told you I wouldn't marry Clem if he were the last man on earth and I mean it! Can't you see that I hate him? I made a

mistake in loving him, but I shan't make a worse one by marrying him."

Oh, the harrowing torture of that next half hour! The ugly, sordid level that we reached there! Clem, white-lipped and frightened, tried to speak to me, and father threatened, but I clung stubbornly to my decision and told them to let me alone, and at last my father realized I couldn't be moved.

"Jane, you'll marry Clem Whaler tonight or you'll leave this house. If you won't consider your own disgrace you'll have to consider your younger sisters. I'm willing to give you money but if you think you are bigger and above conventions and decency and what's honorable, then you're going to face it alone! You've got to go."

Still I couldn't believe he meant it! Surely my father would not put me out tonight like this, with no place to go! Surely he couldn't be so heartless, so old-fashioned! My mother would stop him. But mother said nothing. She only cried softly and in a daze I realized that Dad was serious. Without a word I put on my hat and coat and walked out into the rain.

I HAD gone perhaps half a mile down that sodden, storm-washed road when I heard footsteps behind me, and Reverend Cassel called out to me to wait. I didn't want to. I didn't want to see him or my father or Clem again, but I was too weary to run, and too torn with suffering to resent anything.

"Jane!" His low voice came to me through the stillness. "Jane, you come with me. There's a room at the rectory where you can stay until you decide what you want to do. Will you come with me?"

The unexpected kindness touched me as nothing else might have done, and I reached out a hand to him. "You mean you'd take me into your home? Are you sure you want me there? You know—"

"I know all about it, Jane, and whatever has gone before is done. You're braver than most girls and I confess I admire your stand. You'll be all the stronger in after years for what you are going through now. Come on, Jane, I'll take you to my mother."

The days passed sluggishly, and somehow life took on a quiet sort of repose. Mrs. Cassel, the Rev. Cassel's mother, was practically an invalid, and I realized that I could do much to help her about the house. She was a kindly soul who somehow made me feel that I was welcome there in the quiet parsonage, and as time went on, both she and George Cassel made it plain that they did not wish me to leave.

I stayed, and I learned to love Mrs. Cassel as I might have loved my own mother if she had ever shown me the understanding that my young heart craved. And the Rev. Cassel became my special god. I learned to respect him with all the intensity of a nature that needed an outlet for its emotion.

ON THE first day of April my little son was born in the clean, quiet ward of a maternity hospital. I lay for a long time in a land of fog, dense, poisonous, almost unbearable, where nothing could be seen or heard distinctly. The one thing of which I was acutely conscious, the only thing which was not dulled or muted—was pain; agonizing, excruciating pain. But, at last, I fought my way back to consciousness and waited for the nurse to bring in my little son. I wanted him, wanted to feel his tiny, clutching hand, his warm, soft lips, but beneath all desire and longing was a sense of shame that I had fought against for months. It was, I realized, an injustice to bring a child into the world with not even the protection of a name!

Two weeks later, on Saturday afternoon, Rev. Cassel took me back to his home. There was the same friendly attitude, the same kindly courtesy, but beneath his calm exterior I sensed trouble, and I wondered. That night I knew.

I was upstairs when they came, a committee of men and women, to demand an explanation from Rev. Cassel.

"That woman, Reverend Cassel, must leave town immediately. We cannot understand why you have harbored her so long!" It was Mr. Whaler speaking, Clem's father, a pillar of the church, a power in the community!

I crept slowly down the steps, and faced them, a tired, wasted figure in a checked gingham dress that was faded with many washings, and I felt my eyes grow dim with unshed tears as I searched the faces of people who once had been my friends. Mrs. Jenkins saw me first, and her mouth tightened while she nodded to the others.

Almost as if she had telegraphed a signal, the little group turned to face me, and Mr. Whaler spoke: "Jane Bullard, for months we have waited for you to show some sign of repentance for your sin. We have spoken to Brother Cassel about you, but you have preserved a shameful silence. What is the answer? Naturally, we cannot have our church shield a sinful woman from the consequence of her folly."

I took an unsteady step toward Mr. Whaler and I felt my face go white and cold, but I spoke distinctly. "Are you quite sure you would like me to tell the truth? Would you like me to tell you the name of the man—?"

Mr. Whaler's face paled and there was a curious quiver in his voice. "I realize you've made a mistake, Jane, but something must be done about it," he quavered.

"We all make mistakes, Mr. Whaler," I retorted bitterly, "mine was in loving a sneaking, lying thing who called himself a man. I don't love him now, and I won't marry him! So long as he'll let me live in peace, I'll not trouble him, but you're all going to let me alone! You can't drive me away, and you can't frighten me or force me!"

When the white picket gate closed behind them, Rev. Cassel took my hand in his. "Jane, I wish I didn't have to tell you, but your father is ill. He has been sick for almost a week, and I am afraid when he hears of this—you know he will hear, Jane. Tell me, Jane, can't you bring yourself to see your father? I know he has been hard but remember, child, he is old. You would not wish him to die with this bitterness between you, would you?"

I looked up at our minister with tears scalding my eyes. I reached out a hand timidly. "Do you want me to go back to my father and say I'm sorry? I am sorry—for everything, but I couldn't do what he wanted me to do, and he did drive me out! I can't forgive that! He didn't stick to me when I needed him! Do I have to go back and see him?"

George Cassel's eyes rested on me with something akin to pain in their blue depths. "Jane, a very wise man once said 'Father, forgive them!'"

I turned away with a sob in my throat.

A WEEK passed slowly while I fought a furious battle with myself, one moment wanting to go to my father, and the next, vowing that nothing, not anything could make me plead with him for forgiveness and understanding. I saw Clem Whaler twice that week, each time standing across the street looking toward the parsonage. Somehow he seemed older, more serious than he had been last fall, and I felt a curious lump in my throat. How could I have loved him so desperately, and yet hate him so fiercely now? Watching him through the lowered blind, seeing the dejected way in which he slumped against the great tree, I wondered if he remembered those sweet, mad hours, and regretted the love he had thrown away. Did he know what a lovely little baby lay cooing in his tiny bassinet, and had he any desire to see his child?

I pulled down the curtain with a vicious jerk and spoke through clenched teeth. "You'll never see him, Clem Whaler! You'll never touch him! You'll watch from a distance, and I'll teach him to hate his father, and

you'll never, never hold your first-born in your arms!"

Rev. Cassel, his eyes a little misty, spoke from the doorway. "Jane, I, too, saw Clem across the street, and I came up to tell you. The boy has talked to me, and begged me to tell you how bitterly he regrets everything. He is older now, and wiser, and he wants you to let him help you care for the child. Jane, how can you be so sweet and—and yet so bitter?"

I threw back my head. "Reverend, it's pretty late for Clem Whaler to come begging, don't you think? I can't forgive him! Don't you see that?"

He looked at me. "Jane, malice is a terrible thing. You are brewing a bitter broth for yourself and the little child whom you profess to love. Think well before you deny him the right to a father's name."

I dropped to my knees beside the baby's bed, and I buried my face in my hands, sobbing out all the bitterness and hopelessness of the months behind me, and the years ahead. I did not even hear when Rev. Cassel turned and went softly down the stairs.

IT WAS Easter—a glorious day smelling of bursting buds and crocus blooms. Mrs. Cassel and her son were out delivering Easter baskets to needy families, and I was alone in the house when the phone rang sharply, awakening my sleeping baby. I lifted the receiver and felt a wave of sudden homesickness when I heard my mother's voice.

"Janie, your father is ill, and he is calling for you. Will you come? Maybe you can quiet him. Oh, little daughter, I've wanted you, too, but we thought to punish you for your stubbornness but I'm afraid dear, we've all been too hard, too unyielding and unchristian. Now Dad is sick, awfully sick, and he keeps asking where you are. Will you—"

"I'll come," I told her. "I'm not coming back to beg, but I can't stay away if he wants me. I'll be there, Mother! I'm coming!"

I wrapped my baby warmly in a soft white blanket. I would have to walk two miles, but it didn't matter. I had walked that distance to school a thousand times, and I could make it, even though I was not yet strong. I left a note for Mrs. Cassel and her son, telling them where I was going, and then started out for the other side of town.

At the corner of Main and Liberty Street I passed half a dozen hoodlum boys who called vile names after me, and one, bolder than the rest threw a colored Easter egg with unerring aim. It struck me between the shoulders and all in an instant I knew fear. I felt as if I were walking beneath a sword that any moment might drop. Then I felt a strong arm about me, and Clem Whaler spoke.

"Jane, it's killing me to see you like this! Come with me. Let me take you where you want to go. I won't trouble you, only, let me get you out of this!"

Gratefully I crept into his little sedan. I clutched my baby closer to my breast. "Take me home, Clem. My father—is ill!"

I was sobbing quietly, and I was scarcely aware that Clem had leaned over and pulled the covering away from Sonny's face.

"Why, Jane, he's so little—and—Jane, will you let me hold him, just a minute?"

Awkwardly he took the small, squirming bundle in his arms, and there was a look of awe on his face, a worried frown on his forehead. "Do you think he's warm enough? He looks pucky!"

"He's all right," I said shortly. I was afraid of the sudden, curious pain about my heart. I reached for Sonny and held him tightly, and Clem's eyes met mine. "Jane, will you—can't you forgive! I love you, Jane! I want my wife—and my son!"

I CLOSED my eyes for a moment and held the baby tighter to my breast as the little sedan bumped along the road. What iniquity of perversity kept me from throwing myself in Clem's arms? But for months I had hoarded hate in my soul and for the life of me I couldn't throw it off although my heart bled at my own stubbornness. But I couldn't speak. I could only shake my head mutely and with a sigh, Clem drove up our runway and I got out of the car.

"I'll wait for you, Jane," Clem said humbly.

"You needn't," I said dully, "I may stay late."

Clem's face twisted. "No, you won't, Jane," he said quietly. "Your dad is as stubborn as you are. It's a vicious circle, Jane. So long as you won't forgive me, your father won't forgive you and the human being you love the most—your baby, *our* baby—is the sufferer. You're not

my lips and I responded to his kiss with every breath in my body.

"Jane," he cried hoarsely, "you do love me." It was the triumphant cry of a man who has vanquished his mate.

"Oh, Clem, I thought I hated you but maybe—maybe I do love you!"

Tenderly Clem helped me up the porch. "I'm going in with you to your father, Jane. I have a feeling that whatever ails him will be cured when he sees us together, you and I and our kid."

And Clem was right. Dad had had a heart attack and the doctor had ordered him to bed. We entered his room together, with Mother in the background cooing and talking baby-talk to Sonny. Dad looked at us for a moment as if he couldn't believe his eyes and then slowly his face broke into a smile. It was such a pathetic, sad

## WRONG WAY TO HOLD YOUR MAN!



1. Intimacy breeds contempt—and *too much* intimacy makes a girl lose her glamour.
2. A certain amount of mystery makes a woman more desirable. It is a mistake to lose that air of illusiveness!
3. Men like to pursue—not be pursued. Let him run after you otherwise he'll stop running entirely.
4. The way to keep a man guessing is to promise with your eyes more than you intend to give!
5. To yield one inch until you've got your engagement ring is to lose half a mile in the marriage race!

happy, Jane. I know you're not! You may have your pride but pride is only another name for stubbornness . . ."

I had one foot of the running board and one on the ground and I stopped a moment to shift the baby more comfortably in my arms. Clem's words beat against my heart but I closed my ears to them.

Suddenly Clem was out of the car and wordlessly he caught me in his arms, the baby between us. Then, tenderly but with a man's determined grip he caught my chin in his hands and jerked my mouth down against his. It came so suddenly, I could only gasp and then as his lips pressed mine, softly and then with a deep demanding pressure my knees began to melt. I would have fallen but for Clem's strong arms around me, holding me to him. His lips still held mine and suddenly my heart seemed to rise to

smile that I began to cry. Suddenly I was on my knees at his bedside and between sobs and laughter, I told him that Clem and I were going to be married just as soon as we could get Reverend Cassel over here.

But the happiest moment of all was when Dad took the baby in his arms.

"You've been a naughty girl, Jane," Dad said quietly, "but you've got a lovely young 'un and maybe you two needed this lesson to prepare you for life. . . ."

And while the two old grandparents played and cooed with the baby, Clem and I went down to the living-room where, while we waited for the minister to come, we opened our hearts to each other and renewed those promises that once had meant life and happiness to me and which, please God, they will mean to us both for evermore.



Only one terrible thought possessed me. Jill had not fallen from the balcony. SHE HAD BEEN PUSHED!

MAY I never live through a tragedy as great! The orchestra had been playing "I'll Sing You A Thousand Love Songs," and over the great ballroom, rainbow-colored lights played on the dancers—dozens of happy young men and young women meeting together in this joyous way for almost the last time before college closed for the summer vacation. Commencement was only twenty-four hours away.

The strains of the waltz shivered into silver silence. Applause came fleetingly. The spell of the night was upon us. Somehow we couldn't break it by boisterous hand-clapping. Perfumed night. June. A pulse of life leaped high. Girls, beautiful, exquisite in their ethereal, fluffy dresses. Music that throbbled into silence on the magic air that was pregnant with romance.

What a setting for a tragedy!

It came quickly. A girl's scream, high flung, despairing. Then the sight of the slim young body hurtling down from the high balcony, fifty feet to the floor below.

The dancers scattered to the sides of the room like a flock of frightened chicks. Only a few seconds it lasted—that tragic fall, but to the horror-stricken on-lookers it seemed like centuries.

The next few minutes were pandemonium. Girls were

blue eyes were already glazing over when Jill called one name. "Gay. Gay."

Only that. God had been merciful. Jill's death agony had lasted but a few minutes. Poor little girl, lying there in her shimmering dress like a gay moth that has battered its bleeding wings against the bright lights and fallen, bruised and broken, to the street below.

That name, Gay, brought Dig Ellington to his feet. His

screaming, some of them in wild hysterics. Someone told me later that half a dozen fainted.

But only one terrible thought possessed me. Jill Bonnell had not fallen by accident from that second mezzanine railing. SHE HAD BEEN PUSHED.

To the very day of my death I will be able to close my eyes again and hear that terrible scream the girl gave as she fell to her death. I had glanced up quickly, my eyes following the sound of the scream. That minute Jill's slight body was being pushed over the iron railing backward. I caught the shadowy gleam of a white face bending over Jill. And then that awful sight. A girl's body in black falling, falling, falling.

Dig Ellington, a young interne, was taking charge of the situation. In every group there is a Dig Ellington, a cool, masterful personality with presence of mind enough to take charge of a critical situation. Dig Ellington was that kind.

"Step back," he ordered, a note of despair in his voice. "Step back. Can't you see?"

We could see. Not a person in the anxious-faced throng that made a quiet, awed circle about the tragic heap on the floor but knew the awful portent of the sight.

Life was edging fast for beautiful Jill Bonnell. She lay just as she had fallen, huddled in a little, crushed heap, partly on her side and partly on her back. Her exquisite arms were outflung—in that last, despairing gesture.

There was a gasp from the crowd. Jill's dying blue eyes were opening, slowly, wanly, as though their owner waked fleetingly from a drugged sleep.

Dig Ellington bent close to hear the words her failing lips would utter. They came clear as a bell—Jill Bonnell was using the last flare of her mortal strength to accuse her murderer. "Why—did—you—" And an awful instant. Would dying lips hold strength to finish? The

# HER DATE with DEATH!

*The Confession of a  
Co-ed's Tragic Passion*

face was ashy white. Something in my sympathetic heart turned over at the sight of it.

"Where is Gay? Mrs. Slade, do you know where Gay is?"

Instinctively, he turned to me in his trouble. I am Mrs. Slade, chaperon at the sorority house in which Gay and her room-mate, Jill, lived.

"She was here a few minutes ago, Dig," I told him.

"She left the room not ten minutes ago with—with Jill," some person in the anxious crowd volunteered the information with a shuddering glance at that pitiful object on the floor of the rotunda.

It was the Dean of Women whose remark brought sense to the crowd. "Telephone the police," she said. "And all of you here, leave the room, with the exception of Mrs. Slade and Mr. Ellington. We must—must leave Jill here—until the police arrive." Dean Wiley's word was law. The silent crowd that only a few minutes before had been laughing and dancing, joyously, filed from the great rotunda into the dressing rooms at the side and out the various exits, awed and silent.

I could not tear my mind away from the suspicion the Dean's words had held.

"You mean, Dean Wiley," I asked her point blank. "You mean that Jill was murdered? You mean that someone pushed her from that balcony?"

"I'm afraid I do mean it, Mrs. Slade," Dean Wiley admitted. "Jill couldn't have fallen accidentally. The iron railing there is more than waist high. She would have been compelled to climb upon it to leap off if she had committed suicide. Any person who knew Jill knew that she didn't—didn't do that."

I KNEW that statement was true as well as Dean Wiley knew it. Jill Bonnell had been one of the most joyous creatures I have ever known. And she had so much to live for. Youth, beauty and wealth. What more enviable assets for a girl?

Jill was twenty. She was about to graduate from the University. Her father, who had made literally millions in lumber, had died a year before, leaving Jill an heiress. Dean Wiley was right. Why should a girl who has everything to live for commit suicide? It was unthinkable, unbelievable. But I had no time to consider.

Dig Ellington turned to rush from the room, but Dean Wiley stopped him.

"Come back, Dig," she said. "You are to stay here until the police arrive."

"But I want to find Gay," the boy put in. "This will be terrible shock to her. She loved Jill like a sister—"

"Gay must wait until the police come, Dig," Dean Wiley said. "Then if they—"

"You don't mean for an instant—" Dig broke in wildly, but Dean Wiley stopped him.

"I don't know," she said slowly. "Gay's name was the last word Jill breathed. They were room-mates. They loved each other, but Dig—they were jealous of each other, too?"

I felt sorry for Dig. He stood there, big, handsome boy that he is, the tears flooding into his handsome black eyes.

"There was only one girl I really loved, Dean," he said slowly. "Gay. I've known Jill since the time I was a little boy, but—"

"I know," Dean Wiley said, patting his arm as a mother might. "I know, lad, and Gay needs you more now than she ever has before."

The police came. A big kindly officer in charge of a squad of grave-faced men.

"You did exactly right, Dean Wiley," he said. "And you are correct, I believe in thinking that this is not a case of suicide, but one of murder."

The officer's orders to his men were brief. The beautiful, broken body of Jill was to be carried away in the police ambulance waiting below.

"I want you three to wait here," Captain Banks directed the three of us who waited. "Is the elevator running?"

"The elevator does not go to the top balcony, and it doesn't run at all at night," Dean Wiley explained. "Only this floor was in use tonight."

"How did Miss Bonnell happen to go up there then?" the officer questioned.

"I don't know. There are rules forbidding it. And the door leading to the high balcony is kept locked."

Captain Banks left the rotunda, and we could hear him a few minutes later taking the circular stairs three at a time. We knew he was going up to see the place from which Jill had fallen.

Five anxious minutes later we saw his head pop up suddenly over the railing. The flood lights from the dome made the railing light as day, although the back of the high balcony was shrouded in shadows.

And then we saw Captain Banks stoop suddenly. Some bit of evidence, perhaps, some clue that would help him apprehend the person who had pushed Jill Bonnell over the balcony and to her death. We could see that he lifted the something up in his arms, but my middle-aged eyes certainly could not see as well as Dig's evidently could, for he rushed from the room like a madman, to join the police officer.

I was glad, then, that the officers had sent every person away from the building. For the two men were carrying another girl into the room. A girl that I loved as much as I would have loved a daughter of my own if life had ever given me one—Gay Loring.

"She'll come around all right," Captain Banks said. "It's only a faint." Then to me, "Now, Mrs. Slade—I believe you said your name was Mrs. Slade—do you know this young lady here?"

"She is Gay Loring," I told him, "I'm the chaperon at her sorority house."

"Then she knew the dead girl?"

"She was Jill Bonnell's room-mate."

"Was there ever any trouble between these girls?"

"Only little disagreements. They—they—"

"Yes, they quarreled," the officer said slowly. "Come on and tell me the truth. What trouble was there between them?"

"They had quarreled—over the same young man."

Dig Ellington sprang to his feet, "How do you dare tell that, Mrs. Slade?" he challenged, his black eyes burning into mine. "Gay is engaged to me. Jill knew that. She—oh, it just happened, officer, that you found Gay up there. There'll be an explanation of everything. I know that Gay wouldn't—why, Gay wouldn't harm anything. She's the tenderest little thing in the world and she loved Jill."

"You found her—Gay, up there?" It was Dean Wiley who asked the question.

"She had fainted," the officer said, "just as she started down the little stairway. The thing had been too much for her. After she pushed the girl off—after she saw the horror of the deed she had committed she couldn't—"

We had all been interested in the thing Officer Banks had to say, and all of us, even Dig, had forgotten the girl on the couch for the instant.

We turned now at the sound of her long sigh.

She was sitting up on the cushioned bench, and her big gray eyes were filled with terror. "You don't mean—oh, you don't mean that you think I could have pushed Jill. You don't mean—"

"We don't mean anything—yet," the officer said kindly but firmly. "Suppose that you just sit back there and tell us exactly what happened."

**H**OLDING tightly to Dig as though to gather strength from his reassuring arms, Gay told her story.

"We went up there—to talk things over."

"What things?"

"Some things—some things that we—we didn't agree upon."

Dig Ellington faced the officer impatiently. "Can't you see that she's all broken up? That she ought not to be questioned this way?"

But Gay hushed him. "I want to tell the officer, Dig," she said. "I must tell him all. We went up there, officer, to talk and to look down at the crowd."

"Go on," the officer insisted, when poor Dig would have interrupted to spare Gay. "How long had you been up there when it happened?"

"Not more than ten minutes."

"What had you been doing?"

Gay's answer came slowly. "We—we quarreled."

"And then?"

"The orchestra was playing 'I'll Sing You A Thousand Love Songs.' I had the next number with Dig. I told Jill that I had to go down. I asked her to go with me, that we couldn't get anywhere with our quarreling and that if she'd come, then we'd talk it over at home—tonight."

"Yes. And then—"

"She wouldn't come. She said she wanted to watch the dancers and think. She said she would come in a few minutes. I turned to leave her. I had just got to the door that opens into the little stairway. I had my hand on the knob—when I—I heard her scream—"

"What did you do then?"

"I rushed over to the railing—the balcony is only a few feet wide—and I saw her falling. I—I heard her strike the floor below."

"Had she climbed up on the railing? Did she fall face downward as though she had flung herself from it, or did she fall backward?"

"It seemed to me that she fell backward," Gay said. "But I—I can't be sure."

But the police captain pressed his questions. "Did any person go up onto the balcony with you?"

"No."

"You're sure?"

"I'm sure that no person went up with us."

"But there might have been a person hidden on the balcony."

"I don't think so. I believe—I know we were all alone."

"But it isn't light up there," Dig put in, catching at this straw of defense. "Somebody might have followed you up there. You couldn't be sure, Gay. The flood lights at the dome shine directly down into the rotunda. See. They are shaded to do exactly that. That makes the little balcony up there dimly lighted. A person could easily have been hidden up there."

"I believe we would have seen them," Gay said wanly. "The balcony isn't wide and it isn't big. And there's light enough up there to see by."

Dean Wiley had hold of Gay's hand, urging her to tell the officer everything. "Dear, how did you happen to go up to such a mouldy, duty place? Did you ever do such a thing before?"

And Gay answered her question frankly. "One time be-

fore, Dean Wiley. The first week I came to the university, four years ago, I met Jill up there. She'd gone like all of us—green things that we were—because this building once had been the old state capitol and from out of the little windows near the dome up there you can see all over the city. And when there's music and dancing down here it's like fairyland to look down and watch."

"But the place is kept locked. Wasn't that the order of the President?"

"Yes, a couple of years ago, since the fraternity pledges suspended a skeleton swiped from the medical building, from the dome lights."

"Then how did you manage to get in there tonight?"

"It was open."

"What made you suggest such a madcap thing as going up there?" It was Dean Wiley's question, and Gay Loring met it without flinching. "I thought, maybe, if we went up there, where we had first met when we were just freshmen—and we've lived together ever since—that we could talk over our disagreement and maybe Jill would understand better."

**I** HAVE never been so sorry for a human being in my life as I was for Gay that night. Jill Bonnell was dead, and the big, kind-faced officer was no longer compassionate. Sternness had taken the place of kindness in his face, and he was determined to break down Gay's morale and make her confess.

But at Gay's side, his arms about her, Dig stayed, a staunch defender. Something tugged at my heart at sight of the splendid pair making their superb stand together.

But the stern-faced officer did not win his point. Gay Loring stuck to her original story, and she did not alter it by the slightest detail. The two girls had quarreled—over a matter that was entirely personal, and that Gay would not disclose. Leaving Jill, Gay had heard her room-mate's scream. She had turned in time to see Jill falling to her death, but had been too confused and too horror stricken to see anything but the beginning of that awful accident before she had fallen in the death faint from which we had restored her.

The situation, regrettable as it was, might have dropped there, for Gay's tragic gray eyes impressed her hearers that the girl told the literal truth.

Besides, she was popular on the campus. She had been a well behaved honor student and she had won the respect and admiration of her classmates and of the university faculty.

But slowly the net of circumstantial evidence began to tighten about the girl.

First, a scrap of paper found in her room. A scrap of paper bearing a scrawling line in the dead girl's handwriting. "The threat is not like you."

Just that line. So Gay had threatened the dead girl? Threatened her with what?

Even the pitiful little secret Gay had tried so hard to keep came out in the investigations which followed.

Jill and Gay had quarreled bitterly over Dig Ellington.

Dig had known Jill Bonnell all her life. They had been boy and girl sweethearts in the old high school days. Then college.

At college the two had met Gay Loring, and the love that Dig had known for the girl back home had faded into insignificance by the side of his love for the girl they now accused of being a murderess.

At first the two young things, thoroughbreds that they were, had fought against their love.

"It will ruin all our lives if Jill marries me," Dig had said. "I love you and you love me. We belong to each other."

But the loyal little Gay had held her ground. "I couldn't do that to Jill," the girl said miserably. "I love her like a sister. I couldn't hurt her—like that—"

So Jill had not known until, shrewdly suspecting, she had forced unhappy Dig only recently to tell her the story.

The two had quarreled bitterly. Jill had said she preferred death to giving up her sweetheart.

Those of us who loved Gay caught upon that statement. Then there had been a secret motive for suicide. There had been a reason why Jill would climb to the railing of the high balcony and leap to her death. She was broken-hearted, disappointed in love.

THE coroner's jury would have returned a verdict of suicide I believe and, had it not been for Jill Bonnell's relatives, and the finding of her will, the case might have been closed without an indictment.

Jill had only two relatives. Her stepmother and the stepmother's daughter by a first marriage.

Mrs. Bonnell, the stepmother, was a handsome, bold-eyed woman just past middle age. Beautifully gowned, well poised, she bore every earmark of the woman of wealth. Her daughter, Miss Morley, was not so prepossessing. She was a tall, angular woman in her early thirties, and all of the beautiful clothes and careful grooming failed to make her either attractive or good looking.

"Her father was a race horse owner," Dean Wiley told me. "He made a lot of money but he lost a lot, too. It was a fine thing from his widow's standpoint when she met Carl Bonnell, a millionaire. But Mrs. Bonnell is an estimable woman in her way. She has been generous with the money she inherited from him, and she was good to Jill. But of course it was Jill who had inherited most of her father's wealth. Jill loved her stepmother almost as she would have loved her own mother. And Miss Morley, though no blood relation at all, was very dear to Jill."

It came, then, with a distinct surprise that Jill's will should provide generously for her room-mate, Gay Loring. There were bequests to the mother who had, of course, been taken care of in the father's will, a handsome sum settled upon Miss Morley and an equal amount upon Gay Loring.

"To my dear room-mate," the will read, "whom I love like a sister."

The contents of that will came like a thunderbolt to the university settlement.

Especially the remark the embittered Miss Morley made. "So! She has feathered her nest," Miss Morley said, "One hundred thousand dollars for being a room-mate. But the will shall not stand. We shall contest it."

It is quite likely, then, that the evil propaganda against Gay Loring came from Miss Morley, who felt that Jill's bequest should have come to her instead of her room-mate.

Certain it was that the coroner's jury came to the decision that Jill was murdered and, hard upon that finding, came the Grand Jury's indictment of Gay Loring as the guilty one.

It was a sensation! Pretty Gay Loring held on trial for her life and the stepmother and stepsister of Jill Bonnell determined to avenge the dead girl.

I shall never forget the trial. Thousands of dollars figured in it, and money can buy anything. Mrs. Bonnell and her daughter were the accusers.

It seemed that the net of circumstantial evidence tightened about poor Gay's throat. Gay was a poor girl. She had been working to pay her expenses through college by private tutoring.

And it was a well-known fact that a part of her expenses had been assumed by the generous dead girl. The thing not

so well known was that talented Gay made up for this generosity by her services to Jill.

But it all seemed so clear. Jill and Gay had quarreled. Alone on the balcony that fatal night the impulse to kill had come to Gay. There was motive enough, too. Gay Loring, a girl working her way through college, would become a wealthy woman at the death of her room-mate.

And that fatal bit of paper! "*The threat is not like you—*" in the dead girl's handwriting.

I sat in the court room that day in despair. I, who loved Gay as I would love my own daughter, had been forced to testify against her. I had seen a white face bending over Jill the instant before the tragic fall. I could not affirm nor deny that it had been Gay.

Surely the drama of that scene was poignant. White faced Gay in the chair of the accused. Dig at her side, head flung high, flags of color that showed he would fight to the bitter end, flaming in his cheeks. The girl's attorneys sat there, too. Powerless, for they knew the tide of evidence was sweeping against her.

And across the broad table the two accusers, mother and daughter, fighting for what they called revenge, but for what some of us in our innermost heart, knew was only greed.

SUDDENLY Dig leaned over to Gay's attorney. He whispered to him earnestly. Following his whispered conversation, the defense attorney called Gay to the witness stand, and those of us who loved her gasped with pity. The child had been through a Gethsemane of torture the day before. Must it all be gone through with again?

But a new note seemed to have crept into the proceedings. Was it triumph that had flared into the face of Dig Ellington? And what was this sudden hope that sustained a trembling, white-faced girl?

The usual preliminary questions were asked.

Then: "Miss Loring, look close at Miss Marcia Morley, the lady seated at the left of the prosecuting attorney."

Gay did as directed.

Marcia Morley started perceptibly, her face paling. "Tell the court the occasion on which you saw Miss Morley last. JUST BEFORE THE MURDER OF JILL BONNELL."

There was a silence over the court room like the silence of death. A gasp—then breathless waiting. The air was tense with expectation.

Gay turned slowly. "I saw her—" she began, but she never finished the sentence.

Marcia Morley was on her feet, her homely face livid with passion, working with emotion. "You lie," she shrieked. "You lie. I did not come to Jill's room—"

She stopped suddenly, her own words had been her accuser.

"I won't talk—I won't talk—" she screamed to the court attendants who surrounded her, "I won't talk—"

But Marcia Morley did talk. They said afterward that she confessed to the murder of Jill less than an hour later.

"I had to have money," the woman said. "I had followed my father's profession. I was betting heavily. I lost. Jill had helped me before so I came to her to help me again. I—I couldn't let Mother know. She was playing the high society game. She didn't want a daughter who was a professional gambler. She never gave me enough money to get along on decently. I didn't have any money else to go to but Jill. I was in her room the night before—she fell. I asked her for money and she refused, said she'd let me know the next night. I met Gay Loring coming down the corridor when I came out of the room.

I didn't think she recognized me. The next night I came again. They'd already gone over to the party. But Jill left a note. It was a part of the note they found in her room later. I tore up the note and stuck the scraps of paper in my pocket. I didn't know that one had dropped. I had threatened Jill that I'd make trouble for her if she didn't loan me the money. And she told me in the note that even my threat would not force her to pay my gambling debts.

"I was desperate. I had to have money right away, so I went over to the building where the party was going on. I thought if I saw Jill when her friends were near and she was in a hurry to get back to them, that maybe she couldn't refuse me again."

"I was coming through the corridor when I saw Jill and her room-mate going into the little circular stairway. I followed them. I was hiding on the balcony when Jill and Gay quarreled. They were up there alone. If Jill felt I wouldn't have to go around begging for money any more—I didn't wait to think the thing through. I came up to Jill and spoke to her softly. She turned quickly, and then I—I pushed her over the railing."

"I heard Gay fall in a faint there on the balcony, and

I watched everybody down below, around Jill. I knew that she was dead. Then I ran down the stairs and away. Nobody saw me, I guess."

IT WAS dear little Gay who told me the rest of the story, days later when the roses of happiness were coming back into her cheeks.

"I would never have thought of that visit to Jill that night before the party if Dig hadn't kept at me to remember. Hour after hour he talked to me, asking me to think, think of anything that had happened or of any person or incident that might give us a clue."

"Just before we went in to the court room that morning I remembered the girl I had met in the corridor that night, coming out of Jill's room."

"But you didn't know who the girl was?"

"Dig didn't either. He said that he just leaned over to the attorney and whispered for him to take the chance. He said that it seemed to him that suddenly something just popped into his brain—showed him the way."

"That was love, honey," I told her. "Dig loves you and you love him. Love showed you the way."

And dear little Gay agreed.

## Let the Dead Past Bury Its Dead!

*She was a lovely, spirited girl and she married him because she loved him. They had every reason to be happy—he was handsome, virile, well-to-do. The only rub was that he had been married before and his first wife had died in childbirth with the baby.*

*"You'll find it difficult being a second wife," her friends warned her.*

*But Della scoffed at them. Besides the first wife was dead for nearly seven years— And so they were married.*

*At first they were happy and then Della realized that she had a more formidable rival than a woman who discovers her husband has a mistress. Her rival was the spirit of his dead wife. Whatever she did—wherever she went—however she managed, she was reminded that Beth, the first wife, did things differently. Not only Tom but his mother and all his friends seemed to conspire to make Della first-wife-conscious. Fight it though she would, at last it got her and Della became so miserable that even in her husband's arms she felt he was comparing her with her dead predecessor.*

*Finally in despair, Della left her husband and got a divorce. In due time Della married again. Scarcely a year after her second marriage, her husband was killed in an accident.*

*Della, now a widow, was in a daze. One day Tom came to see her and told her he still loved her. He begged her to marry him and give him another chance. Della, who still loved Tom, agreed.*

*Whenever Tom mentioned his first wife, Della retorted by singing the praises of her second husband. In no time, she laid the ghost of Beth out for all times! Neither Tom nor any of his friends have ever mentioned Beth again. None of them can bear hearing about Della's dear, departed and perfect second husband!*

Fantastic as it may seem, here's the confession of a girl who was brought back from death by a love that would not be denied.



# I Flew into the SPIRIT WORLD

"Don't die and leave me," Joe was saying over and over again. "I love you. You are mine and I am yours, through all eternity."

I STOOD on the wing of the airplane. I waited, with the rip-cord in my hand, for the signal to dive.

And then I dove—straight through the blue, counting mechanically, just as Joe had always taught me to do. One—two—three—four—five—six. I pulled the rip-cord.

Then terror—stark, grim, awful, clutched at my heart. For I felt no answering tug at the harness. Always before that tremulous aliveness, that throbbing answer, had told me the big 'chute was opening gracefully and that, in less than an instant, my body would no longer be hurtling down, down, but instead, floating buoyantly on the friendly parachute.

But today I tugged in vain. There was no response. Something—that awful something the parachute jumper always dreads—*had gone wrong*.

Queer, that in that wild instant, I thought of Joe. Always before today Joe had looked over my parachute, had seen that everything was in last-minute readiness. Always, before, he had been right at my side when I entered the plane, to say that last encouraging *au revoir*. But he hadn't been this time. Perhaps he was with the red-headed girl, who was taking him away from me. Now that it would soon be all over with me, her chance to make Joe would come. Queer, that, in those few seconds of time, my mind was perfectly clear. The parachute had failed to open. That

meant death—an agonizing instant, perhaps, as I fought for breath against walls of air that rose up to smother me. After that—oblivion.

Something sweet and hazy and gentle was enveloping me. Clouds? A half consciousness that comes just before the final dissolution? I could not be certain. But I had a fleeting instant of being satisfied with everything.

It was good to be free of the stifling air that crushed the life's breath from me. It was good, no longer to worry—no longer to think of life and death. Death—such a simple, simple thing, anyway! One minute I had stood on the wing of the plane defying death by the slender, silken cord in my hand. The next minute I had met death—and I did not care. Believe me, it was all as simple as that.

I WAS standing, now, on the greensward. I recognized the place so well, right in the center between the race tracks at the Fair ground, almost at the spot where the plane had taken off. I could see the tents of the campers at the State Fair grounds. I could see the big exposition buildings—how proud the State was of its fair! I could see the grand stand, filled with row upon row of faces. I could even see the plane I had leaped from, already trying to make a landing.

Poor Bill, he would be so sad. Bill liked me. Bill would

be sorry that I had fallen to my death from his plane. To death? Why, how silly! How could I have fallen to my death? This could not be death. I had been mistaken, that was all. *Could one be dead and yet see—hear—stand—move?*

I stretched out my arms to the sunshine. I lifted my eyes to the blue, blue of the heavens.

This, then, was the secret of it all. The parachute had opened at the last minute. The air had been pounding against my body so hard for an instant that I must have fainted. I had been wrong to think this was death!

"Never give up," Joe always said. "While there's life there's hope." I laughed aloud, remembering.

How foolish, too, I had been to think I was angry at Joe! Joe loved me, instead of that red-haired college girl. I'd been jealous, that was all. Yes, I laughed aloud, remembering. I who had faced death—and yet lived—could not worry, now, over a silly bit of jealousy.

That minute I saw Joe running toward me. His face was pale. His eyes were like charred coals of fire in the stark whiteness of his face.

It was queer that he trembled even as he ran. I turned and ran toward him. Poor Joe! I must get to him. I must tell him that the 'chute had opened in time; that I wasn't hurt at all, that I was perfectly well and safe.

Then the smile died in my face!

For Joe had passed right through my outstretched, welcoming arms. Had I been mistaken, then, in Joe's regard for me? Wasn't he glad that I lived?

Other people were running toward Joe. I recognized some of them. Bill's mechanic. The fat, good-natured man who presided over the gas station at the hangar. Some of the men from nearby stables, for the race horses were kept within a quarter of a mile of the hangar. Finally Bill himself, all out of breath from his hasty landing of the plane.

He went over to the crowd of people who knelt about the crumpled parachute. Poor Bill, his face was working with emotion. Then he hadn't seen me yet. Did he still think I was dead? How funny!

I went over to Bill. I put my hand on his shoulder. "Well, Bill," I laughed, "you didn't expect to find me alive, did you? The chute opened just in time."

I had expected Bill to turn toward me. To grasp my hand in his friendly, good-natured way and to rejoice that what had started out to be a tragedy had ended in my safety. . . .

But Bill did not even turn toward me. I tugged at his arm with all my strength, but he seemed only intent on that crumpled parachute, around which the others had gathered.

**I**T SEEMED queer to me—uncanny! Here were all these people who had rushed out to aid me, to pick up my maimed and shattered body and, now that I had escaped, they ignored me! None of them spoke to me, even though I called their names, even though I took hold of them and tugged, literally begging them to pay attention to me.

I cannot describe to you the awful terror that clutched at my heart. I moved over swiftly to the group gathered about that crumpled parachute. I must know—right away—what this was all about.

A professional looking man with a brown bag in his hand was running across the field now. The crowd about the crumpled parachute opened a lane, to let him through. They had summoned a physician. But why?

I followed, close upon the heels of the doctor as the crowd opened to let him in. One man stepped between us. There was no time to ask his pardon and I knew I could not avoid running into him.

But I must have, because the next instant I found myself on the other side of him and he had not responded to my quickly muttered word of apology.

And then I heard Joe. He was on his knees by the side of the crumpled parachute and he was sobbing aloud—great, pitiful, wracking sobs that stabbed at my heart.

Why, what had happened? In one awful instant I KNEW. For Joe knelt by the body of a girl—a girl in tan leather breeches, with a suede jacket—why that was what I always wore for my parachute jumps. My white uniform was just my "show" suit! The girl's helmet had fallen to the ground and her short bobbed hair, that she had evidently been letting grow long, clustered about her face and neck. Black, curly hair. The girl's eyes must be black, too, to go with brown, gypsy-like skin, such as hers.

How odd! That was the way I wore my hair and the girl, there, on the ground; the girl Joe sobbed over, looked enough like me to be my sister.

I went close to her. I knelt down, opposite Joe. I touched the girl's hand. It was relaxed, a cold, lifeless weight in my hand.

Poor girl. So young—so pretty—DEAD!

I looked up at the sunlight, caressingly warm like the touch of my lover. The soft breeze rippled the girl's silky hair. Too bad to be dead on a day like this. Too bad!

\* I felt sorry for the girl. I wished she might feel life tingling in her veins such as I had. A life that was like bubbling, rich, rare wine. A new life—a life eternal.

And then—in one instant I knew I was the girl who lay there on the greensward. It was my body over which poor Joe sobbed so bitterly!

"Joe, Joe," I said, catching at his arm. "Don't grieve Don't! Don't! See, I AM HERE! I am not dead. I can't be. Why, I CAN'T be."

The doctor was speaking. "Perhaps she never even knew that the parachute was not opening. The force of the air must have been so terrific that it just clutched the breath from her lungs."

"But I did know. I did know," I told him frantically.

"The body is not mangled as one would expect it to be," the physician went on. "That is because the parachute opened just in time. Every bone in her body would have been crushed if the chute had not opened. But it opened too late, I'm afraid."

Joe was picking the girl up, now, from the ground. Her helmet lay where it had fallen and I saw tears pour from Joe's eyes. Was he remembering other times when he held me in his arms—when I responded to his kisses with warm, passionate lips?

"You are surprised?" a voice asked at my side. I turned quickly. A man stood by me, clothed in that same diaphanous covering which seemed a garment and yet not a garment.

I nodded. "Why, yes, yet it all seemed so natural."

"Until they touched your body you were bound to it by earth ties," my companion explained. "Now you have become one of us. First of all Kathie, I want to ask you if you know who I am."

So this spirit knew my name was Kathryn—Joe called me Kate. Once, months ago, a young aviator had called me Kathie in just that tender tone of voice.

Like a flash I remembered. Jim Delaney—who had crashed on his first solo flight.

"Jim—Jim," I said, "now I know. But you look so different."

"And you look—different, too, Kathie. Death does that to us, you see."

"Jim, we were all so sorry—that day you crashed. One minute you were sailing up there so gaily and the next—" I hid my face in my hands at the remembered horror of it.

"Don't," Jim took my hands from my face gently. "It was not horrible, Kathie. Almost from the very first—after I knew I was a goner, I was glad, just as you are glad now."

"Am I glad, Jim? Am I glad? Why—why I must be. But I didn't want to die. Jim, I—I fought all the way. Oh I wanted to breathe, I wanted to breathe."

Jim nodded. "Yes, all of us do. Until—after. Then it all seems quite normal and natural."

"I felt sorry for Joe," I told him. "He was—taking it so badly. If only I could have comforted him. If only he knew that you would meet me here."

"I asked to come," Jim told me, his hand on mine. "The ALL-WISE watches very carefully over the souls who plunge from one world into the next very quickly. There are so many earth accidents these days. Such souls are troubled, confused. It's like—why it's like stepping off a precipice, isn't it?"

I nodded. I was thinking about Joe. I wished that I could see him again. The wish, somehow, tugged at me like an insistent hand.

Was he taking my death hard? Would he miss our love—my slim, eager body that had responded so ardently to his?

"You're thinking about—him," the spirit that was Jim Delaney said. "That's the way it always used to be—you always thought about him."

"And you—cared?" Quicker that I understood things now that I had not understood before. And I felt perfectly frank, fearless.

"I loved you, yes, all the time. Better, I knew, than he could ever love you. And I meant to win you, too."

"I never dreamed that you cared."

"It wasn't meant that you should know—then."

"Then everything is destined to be? You were destined, from the time you came into the world, to fall with your crashing plane? I was destined to die—too? The parachute never to open?"

Jim nodded slowly. "Mortals do not know it, though, Kathie. It is a part of the plan of the ALLWISE that they do not know."

I tried to listen patiently to Jim as he explained the great plan of the ALLWISE. I wanted to hear and yet, in my heart, I knew I was not yet ready.

A wistful something tugged at my heart. I still loved Joe. Did he grieve for me?

"You're thinking of him now," Jim said, "You are not listening to me."

"I want to go to him," I told Jim. "I can't—I can't be happy here until I see him again, until I know that Joe is not too unhappy. . . ."

Jim held out his hand to me. It seemed to me that I saw a sadness in his face.

"But you are to begin the journey now, with me," he told me slowly. "Ordinarily we would have been far on our way before this but I knew the shock you experienced was great and so I have been patient."

"You have been patient and splendid," I told Jim, "and I am ready to go on with you—wherever it is that you are to take me. But I cannot leave until I see Joe again."

"Let us go, then," Jim said sorrowfully and he took hold of my hand.

WE WENT together, across the greensward, across the race track, through the stands filled with people.

It still seemed strange to me that the humans we passed did not see us. We could see them so well, hear their voices, and they seemed not to know we were near—even though we brushed against them.

All around us the people were talking of the tragic death of the girl parachute jumper.

"So young to die! Poor thing! They say she was going to college, to get an education because the man she loved was educated. He was an attorney. . . ."

"She was just a circus girl who took to parachute jumping because she needed to earn money fast. . . ." someone else said.

Jim held my hand. "Don't let it hurt you, dear," he said. "We'll soon be far enough along with your new training so that nothing earth mortals say will hurt you."

"It doesn't hurt me now, Jim," I told him. "They are just sympathizing. They are sorry for that girl who died. And I am sorry, too, Jim. Listen!"

"Her sweetheart saw her fall," said another. "They'd quarreled. Over some girl he had been engaged to before he met this parachute jumper."

"And now he'll marry the other girl?"

"He would have married her anyway. The circus girl was not his kind. . . ."

"It is true, Kathie dear," Jim told me as he led me away. "Joe's world was not your world and mine. And he could never have learned our world."

"He tried, Jim, he tried. Every day that I was to make a parachute drop he came out to see that everything was right. We . . . we had been everything to each other and some day—when he made good in his profession—he said he'd marry me."

"I know," Jim said, "He desired you. Maybe he even loved you. But even if you hadn't died, he never would have kept his word. But destiny gave you—to me."

WE WERE entering a great building, passing at will through the wood and steel doors as though they did not exist. The place was a hospital. White-robed nurses hurried through the wide corridors. We passed a grave looking man with a stethoscope in his hand. He entered a room hastily.

"Some poor soul is fighting a losing fight," I said to Jim. Jim looked at me curiously. "Yes," he said, and something in his words swept strangely through my heart.

And then I heard Joe's voice. We had entered the room where he sat. The red-haired woman was with him. "Joe," she said, her hand tenderly on his shoulder, "don't give up yet. You loved her. I didn't realize until now—how much."

"I did not know how much either, Adeline," Joe said slowly, "until this afternoon. I loved her, yes, for her gypsy face, for the beauty of her, for her bravery, but now—"

"But now—"

The woman's voice was almost a prayer. I stood there at Joe's side on the very brink of eternity to await his answer.

Jim came over to me. He put his arm about my shoulder, tenderly, like a brother. There was a something in his face that I could not define; a sadness that was deeper than tears, a pathos that was like nothing else, ever, in all the world.

And then Joe's voice. "I love her, Adeline, with all my body, and with all my heart, and with all my soul. Whatever this hour brings forth, whatever happens, she is mine and I am hers, through all eternity."

"Joe, Joe"—it was my voice, ringing, glad, triumphant. A white-coated uniformed nurse hurried into the room. "Come quick," she said, "Come quick."

I called again. "Joe, JOE." Oh, if I could only make him hear me. If I could only make him hear!

The face of Jim was fading away from me. I saw him now, only through the haze of my own tears, his arms still outstretched to me.

But I did not heed him. I wanted Joe. Joe who had said that I was his and he was mine—throughout eternity.

Surely love like that could shatter the bonds that held the spirit world away from those who laughed and loved and walked into the paths that humans trod.

I called again. "Joe. JOE."

Joe was on his feet. He had heard me. Dear God, he had heard!

"Kate, Kate," he sobbed, stumbling toward me, his dear eyes shining with love.

And then, somehow, I had taken the place of a girl who lay on the bed in the next room while nurses and doctors worked over her.

Through a blessed, blessed calm I could hear a strange voice. "She almost—went away," the voice was saying. "Now, if we can keep the breath coming—"

DAYS later, with Joe's arms about me, I was to hear the story of how they had picked me up when I had fallen, how they had rushed me in an ambulance to the hospital and of how, because Joe had fought like a madman to make them, they had worked desperately with a pulmotor to bring back the breath of life that had been crushed from my body.

"You were dead, dear," Joe said, "Dead. They said you were dead. It is a miracle."

And I never told Joe how true that statement was. I had been dead and I had come back to life again, called by a love that could transcend time and eternity. It was as Joe said, a miracle—a miracle of love.

I shall never be afraid, again, to die. For I know now, most truly, that the ALLWISE sends his comforting messenger to guide and direct his children who might lose the way to his throne. I learned it all the day I died.

Dreams can bring fulfillment of the love desires of men and women.  
your most intimate and baffling emotions, satisfy your erotic

In dreams, you may learn to know your true lover, analyze  
instincts, and find the answer to that powerful life impulse.

**T**HROUGH all the years of history, men have puzzled over the meaning of dreams. Today, it is acknowledged by the great psychologists that not only is there a mystic power in dreams, but a potent reality that can change the life of the dreamer. **YOU** must be aware of this. In dreams, you can read your own future, solve the problems of your life, and most important of all perhaps, you can come in contact with your lover, wherever he or she may be.

It is through sleep that your subconscious mind is released—released to find the meaning of the mysteries that surround life. Too often people scoff at dreams, dismiss them as a natural reaction to the realities that assault them daily. Such an attitude is unnatural, for dreams can mean many important things to the dreamer. They can mean romance. In them, you the dreamer, as a free person,

can lead an existence of your own making; in them, you can fulfill your most intimate desires.

However, you must master your dreaming, or your dreams will master you. There must be a period of patient learning on the part of the dreamer in which he must discover how to dream, and how to interpret his dreams. First of all, before you sleep each night, you must concentrate upon the thing of which you wish to dream—whether it be a material problem or a loved one. Slip off to sleep thinking of that object, and it will appear to you in your dream. When you awaken, do not open your eyes immediately, but lie still and contemplate the things of which you have dreamed. Remember your dreams; revive them vividly; and in this way capture the mystic power that is the true and rightful possession of every dreamer.

Think back over your past life. Surely you have had some subconscious experience in sleep which has become a reality sometime later in your life—even though it may have been years afterward.

There is one dream that is commonly experienced by both men and women. It is the dream of falling. The significance of this dream is important to the sex life of both men and women, and therefore it must be interpreted carefully. The dream of falling means that the dreamer is ready for complete sex experiences. It implies that desire bordering upon the abnormal are affecting the libido. A dream of falling, therefore, must be taken as a warning to the dreamer not to allow his sex life to become too active.

Or perhaps, you have dreamed that you were in a certain type of room, and then dismissed the strange dream with

the thought that it had been occasioned by the heavy meal that you had eaten before you slept. Then many years later, you suddenly found yourself in the same room that you had dreamed—and yet you had never seen that room before except in your dream! A phenomenon such as this must not be easily dismissed. You must not hide from the shock that comes to you in such a situation—it is merely a warning that you have developed psychic dream power.

In each and everyone of us there lies dormant that hidden power. Dreams crowd our minds each night and are dismissed in the morning light as fantasies of the imagination. It is for you to grasp this dream power; to concentrate upon it, until you have become the master of your subconscious mind, as you are the master of your conscious thoughts.



How can you interpret your dreams? Thanks to modern science, we of today know much more of dreams than did the "wise men," the professional dream interpreters, of long ago.

Today dreams are being studied in colleges and hospitals; great scientists are constantly analyzing and constructing theories based upon the dreams of human beings.

From the lore of the past have been collected a few symbols upon which the interpretation of all dreams are based. It is known to most all dream interpreters that the majority of adult dreams represent the fulfillment in the subconscious mind of the dreamer of erotic wishes.

For instance, the dream of flying or of aeroplanes, so frequently experienced, designates a wish of coarse sensuality, that in reality, might be entirely foreign to the mind of the dreamer in his everyday life.

Penetrating narrow alley ways or narrow passages of any kind in a dream, is always significant of the marriage act itself. It is a common dream, and must be regarded merely as the subconscious outlet of the dreamer's normal sexual desires.

Sometimes a dreamer remembers a place that he dreamed vividly. His one reaction to the dream is the fact that he is certain that he has been in that place before sometime in his life. This dream is a most interesting one, since it represents the memory of the embryonic life of the dreamer. In his sleep he returns once again to the embryonic stage, and remembers his life before birth.

**T**HERE are certain sexual symbols that occur commonly in most dreams, and are most valuable to him who consciously is trying to determine what his dreams mean. Knives, daggers and umbrellas must always be represented as the male sex; while caskets, closets and stoves represent the female sex.

The dreaming of walking up or down ladders or stairs has been the subject of great discussion by the interpreters.

It has been proved, however, that such a dream is always representative of the sexual union. There is always present a libidinous excitement that is produced by the dream of climbing or descending staircases.

A dream of a churchyard bodes ill for lovers. It means that there will be a separation, and little hope of meeting again for a long time. To see a grave distinctly means that there is unhappiness in store for you in your love life. It is unfortunate to dream of being married, for with such a dream there goes a definite warning to you to guard against a severe illness.

To dream of luxurious surroundings foretells a love marriage with all its happiness, although it also portends hard years of waiting before such a marriage may be achieved.

The common tomato seen in a dream must be regarded

as a happy omen, for, even as its ancient meaning, "love apple," it implies that the dreamer will find utter satiation of his appetites in love, and love alone.

Dreaming of beautiful lace is a sign that you will meet with a passionate lover soon; that you will become involved in a romantic love affair, and that you will eventually find happiness with your children.

The connection between dreams and reality can easily be seen in these few symbols that have been used.

Children's dreams are sometimes the most powerful and the most useful to the dream philosopher. Their minds are fresh and open to impression; it is therefore wise to discover their dreams, and to interpret them carefully.

It is acknowledged by most psychologists that dreams represent the life of the inner man, and that the inner man is the most important part of life. Thus it is imperative that you make use of your dream power. Through dreams the living can be united with the dead, or with those who are commonly referred to as the dead. It is common knowledge that there are many instances proving that the dead have often tried to warn the living through dreams. Therefore, you must endeavor in your dreams to contact those who have died, for they may still have a beneficial influence upon you, and upon your life.

Sometimes people are puzzled by the fact that the faces appearing in their dreams are those of total strangers. This is not to be taken on face value. It has been proved that strange faces in dreams may be no more than an unusual presentation of people known intimately to the dreamer. It is only through a careful analysis of the person about whom you have dreamed, an analysis of their actions and characteristics, that you may identify these faces.

**T**HUS it is that the power contained in the dream life may be readily unfolded to you. To reach full development, however, this power must be carefully studied.

Napoleon's dreams foretold the disasters to come to his realm; Joan of Arc's dreams saved the great nation of France; the Pharaoh's dream, famous to readers of the Bible, saved the Egyptians from destruction from a great seven-year famine.

Dreams are mystic, but the power gained from them does not belong to the mystic alone. It does belong to the man or woman, who, after careful mental concentration, and confidence in this subconscious power, gathers to himself the spiritual force that can come from dreams.

To tamper with the dream life, is to border upon a supernatural danger that can spell ruin. To guard it, to foster it, is to equip yourself with a mystic power that can bring a supernatural strength beyond all thought.

Dreams are the key of life, and as such must belong to that part of life, which as yet, must remain a partial mystery to us all. It is for you to try to discover what your dreams mean to you, and to your life.





# Girl Trap



I HAVE been everywhere. I have seen everything. Blackmail, vice, lust, liquor, dope and murder. These things are an open book to me now—things I never even dreamed existed in those happy days with the good sisters of the Convent du Sacre Coeur in Montreal.

I am sorry that life has given me the knowledge of these things; but at least I can pass this story of my experiences on to others as a warning. I am going to tell you everything.

I do not claim to be guiltless. But I do know if I had had some kind advisor, wise in the ways of the world, to point out to me the evils of the way ahead, instead of scheming vultures ready to take advantage of my innocence, my tragic life would have been a different story. It is for that reason that I write this story now, that other girls as innocent as I once was, may profit by the sad lesson of my experience.

The first thing that comes to my mind is a certain night in my convent room exactly seven years ago. I was seventeen years old then. It is all coming back to me now as I sit in my dim furnished room writing this.

That afternoon I had fallen in love. I shall call my lover Pierre Gallincourt. I met him at a tea dance. Once a year we convent girls used to get a day's freedom, though we were under the eyes of the nuns all the time.

At that party there had been hundreds of boys and girls dancing. I didn't know how to dance and so I didn't expect anyone to notice me.

Of course, I didn't have any business looking at a man, but it wasn't anything I had done on purpose. I just gazed around and by accident my eyes suddenly paused to stare into those of a man who was watching me.

He was dark-eyed and attractive and his eyes stared burningly into mine. I felt just as if I were under a spell.

I wanted him to come over near me. I thought he might pretend to know me or something. He woke up something that had been sleeping in me, maybe from childhood days. I never had had any kind of affection. My folks had put me in a convent early. I felt by a strange instinct that I wanted to hear something about romance. I didn't even know what romance or love was, but I just felt that I wanted to find out if I could.

Finally, he did come over. I could feel my face getting very warm as he came toward me. It was his eyes that made me feel so funny. I wondered what I should do. I was afraid of what he would do. He would not know the rules of the convent. I began to shake a little. Through the corner of my eyes I saw that Sister Emilie was still chatting with an old friend of hers.

Pierre must have known that he didn't have any right to speak to a convent girl, but without saying a single word he took my hand very gently and then he kissed it. As he bent toward me, he murmured very gallantly, "My love to you, my dear."

Pierre was a handsome boy. He said he was an engineer, engaged in some big job in connection with making Montreal a beautiful city. I listened to his words as if they came to me in a long, sweet dream. He didn't say very much. French lovers speak very little with their lips.

Sister Emilie was still wrapped up in conversation with her friend. The dancers were as thick as daisies on the dancing space. The music was very good and it made my toes tap on the ground. Pierre and I were not so conspicuous now.

"This night," he whispered pressing my hand warmly, "this night!"

Inexperienced as I was, I could not hold myself back. I didn't know how to behave in such a crisis. It was what I later learned they call love at first sight, he was telling me that he loved me and wanted me this night. He wanted me to break away from the convent and elope with him.

I gave my promise. I don't know why. That is a question no one can answer. I promised to be his bride. For a second I thought how angry the sisters would be when they learned of my elopement, but this great feeling of love banished all my fears.

Quickly we made our plans. As I look back I realize what a foolish child I was, but then I was only a child and to me it seemed like something wonderful. All of a sudden he made me repeat my promise and then he vanished.

And now it was only an hour until he should come for me. I looked out of my tiny window. I could barely see the north wall which was to be our meeting place. Beyond that was the river and up above was a full moon, a big, white, shining disk.

ALL of a sudden I heard the chapel clock strike. One—two—three.

I wrapped a shawl around my head and quietly tiptoed down the long hall, dimly lighted by red night lamps. Finally I got down to the big portal which led out of the dormitory into the north end of the convent gardens. I lifted the iron handle to open it. It was stuck. It didn't give. I felt shaky and wanted to cry. I had started now. There was no turning back.

Quietly, I went down the stone stairs to the kitchen in the basement. I tried to find a chair or a stool, but couldn't. The best I could find was a bench four of us used to sit on at the table. It was heavy, but I managed to get it up to the big door. Once I almost fell down the stairs with it. At last I got the iron bar down.

I dashed through the portal. I felt as though I had been a life prisoner suddenly set free. Now I had to get over to the north wall without any one's seeing me. It was after three o'clock. Maybe Pierre didn't think I was coming.

At the place in the wall where he was supposed to have dropped a rope for me, there was nothing.

"Pierre! Pierre!" I gasped, pounding the big stones in the wall with my little fists. It was useless. I was getting very desperate and scared. I couldn't go back.

I had made up my mind to escape from the convent, even if Pierre did not come for me.

I picked up a stone and rapped against the wall.

Suddenly, about ten feet away, I saw something curling over the wall. It looked like a long black snake.

AS SOON as the rope got within reach, I grabbed it and jerked it, to let Pierre know I was there. My courage came back to me. I knew I had to get over that wall quickly, in case my knocking had been heard.

To this day I don't know how I managed to climb over that high wall. It's strange what courage will do for a frail body in an emergency. Pierre caught me as I jumped the rest of the way into his arms.

We ran down the hard, narrow road. My legs were tired and the sharp stones hurt my feet, but I didn't really feel any pain.

Then we came to a tree near which he had left his car. We rode and rode, mile after mile. It seemed that we glided through an eternity of bliss. It was very still.

"I love you," Pierre kept saying. "I love you, my dear."

Finally he turned the car into a narrow bypath toward a house where a small flickering light was the sentinel. He told me that a priest would marry us there.

Father Michel must have heard us approach. He came to the door with a lantern in his hand.

He held the lantern up to see who we were. As he saw the figures of a boy and a girl, he smiled. Pierre greeted him. Father Michel returned the salutation and beckoned to us to enter.

The marriage ceremony took but a few moments. As my husband and I stepped out of Father Michel's hut, the dawn was creeping up over the hills. The convent was a thing of the past in my life now. I was married. They could never make me go back. I was the bride of young Pierre Gallincourt.

IT WAS an hour and a half before we got back to the aristocratic section of Montreal.

Pierre took me into his gorgeous bedroom in a big apartment. It was done in red and yellow silks. It was marvelous. I had never seen anything so beautiful before, especially when compared to the planks I had to sleep on back at Convent du Sacre Coeur.

"I will love you as no other man in the world could ever love you," he said. His eyes were shining strangely.

My whole body grew like ice all of a sudden. My teeth began to chatter. It dawned on me just what he meant. No matter how little a girl might know about the secrets of married life, there is something in her nature which tells her everything. I had no one to talk to me, to advise me, yet I understood what Pierre meant when he said he would love me as no other man in the world ever could.

I was scared to death. Yet I knew that we had become married and that I promised to love, honor and obey. His eyes were full of fire. He grabbed me firmly and held me with one arm. I started to cry and begged him to let me go. My finger nails were pushing into his throat. Finally, he let go.

"But, my darling, we are married," and his voice was husky, "we are married, and you are mine—my wife. Is it that you do not love me? Ah, but you will, lovely one! I will teach you the meaning of love. Come, give me your lips!"

"I can't let you kiss me like that, Pierre. I'm afraid! Oh, can't you see I'm afraid of you!" I cowered before him like a small animal caught in a trap.

"*Mere de Dieu*," I pleaded, "Mother of God, protect me!"

Slowly, slowly he drew back and his dark eyes nar-

NOW she tells all this convent-bred girl who was trapped in New York's vice racket.



As we left the boat, I had a premonition of danger. There was something wrong and I was suddenly afraid . . . afraid of what the future held for me in this strange, noisy city.

rowed. "My dear, never shall it be said that I should take you—that way."

I saw him go across the room and I wanted somehow to call him back, to explain, but I could not. I slipped into slumber with my hot cheek against Father Michel's little cross.

When I woke next day I rubbed my swollen eyes, wondering if I had dreamed it all. No! There was the strange, brilliant room with the sunlight streaming through the window, the crypt with the Blessed Mother on the east wall. On the table beside the bed was a little note from Pierre.

It said merely that he had to go early to his father's office to see about some important business matters, but that he would return as soon as he could.

"And when I come you'll greet me with a kiss, darling, and say you are glad to be my wife, won't you? I am leaving money for you to buy yourself the things you need. Good-bye, my darling, until later. Pierre."

I held the crisp new bills, more money than I had ever held in my hands before, and a vision of Pierre passed before me. Oh, he was handsome and kind, but there was

something that repulsed me even in his absence. I wanted to run away, to hide myself where he could never find me.

Two hours later I was at the home of Madame Monet. She had been nice to me at that time long ago, when my father and mother had died and I had been left alone with the sisters.

"Jeanne, you? But come in, little one. You are ill."

I stumbled in and told her everything, while her kind hands touched mine gently. I prayed that she, because of the friendship she had borne my mother, would shield me and protect me. You see, I didn't know that long ago, Madame Monet had lost the love of her own husband, and that it would be through her that I would stumble into greater difficulties than any which I might have experienced with Pierre. But—so goes life.

She was very kind to me. She took me to a lot of places. I began to learn the ways of this new and lively world. But I was always afraid that I would run into my husband.

Two weeks later Madame Monet took me to the Cafe Chanteclair. I was shocked to think that she took me without her husband, but they used to disagree a lot and she often went out without him.

The Cafe Chanteclair was a very wild place. It was so wild, Madame Monet told me, that Americans didn't go there very often.

MADAME MONET and I went to a corner where it was quieter. The head waiter, recognizing her, caught her eye and bowed very politely and respectfully. A waiter brought us some cocktails. I was mystified by them. I could never describe them now, but I remembered they tasted very good and had a very nice effect.

A man came over toward us. I could tell that he was an American. Madame Monet waved him away. She told him that I was not a girl from the wharf but a nice, sweet, little angel. I asked her what he was looking for and she angrily replied, "Nothing, nothing." But she said it in a funny tone of voice. "I know him," she said. "He is a very rich American. Very rich, so they say. He comes from Broadway, the gayest street in the world, where they say the most beautiful women and the handsomest men are found."

"Tell me more about him," I begged her.

She told me I was silly; that I should forget about it; that I was too young to get any such ideas in my head. I asked her to tell me more about this strange man who seemed so strange at first and then seemed to be such a fine gentleman.

"Oh, I don't know too much about him," she said. "He's a sort of mysterious man. I think he's supposed to be what they call a theatrical producer. He directs most of the shows on Broadway."

In another moment that American man was back at our table. He was too intoxicated to remember that Madame Monet had told him to get away before.

Madame Monet toyed with her fan and did not again tell the American to go. He was gay, and ordered three drinks to our liking, seating himself so that he might look directly into my eyes.

"To the most beautiful girl in Montreal," he toasted, lifting his glass against mine.

The stranger began talking about himself. Madame Monet could hardly keep her eyes open, and I felt very small and light, but I knew what he was saying.

I told him who my mother had been. She was the famous Marie Corier, the opera singer of Paris of a little over thirty years ago. She is still well remembered there. The American, who by this time told me his name was John Raymond, hesitated and then said he also remembered my mother's glorious triumphs in the opera, but that I was more beautiful than she.

"I will take you back to New York and I will make you the happiest little girl in the world," he said. "I was going to look around here for another week for a girl to take a part in a revue. Maybe you never heard of a revue. Everything will be yours; fame, riches, luxuries; men who will be your slaves. The whole world will be at your feet!"

Madame Monet was no longer able to keep a sharp eye on me as this Mr. Raymond talked. She was fast asleep.

"If you want to go to the United States, I can arrange it," the American was saying. "You see, my passport reads for myself and wife but my wife is not with me. You can pay me back for the passage later, from your salary," he added, when he saw my face change.

Of course I protested against this generosity. Then another thought struck me, and I suddenly blushed. I finally asked him about it in a roundabout way.

"Oh, I shall get two staterooms," he said, "one for you and one for me, of course. You just pretend you're my wife when we dine."

He was so convincing that I didn't see any reason for worrying.

That is how, the next morning, I embarked upon my strange adventure.

As the *St. Lawrence* took me away from Canada, my husband, and the people who had offered me a temporary shelter, I experienced a pang of loneliness. But John Raymond, ever at my elbow, kept up my interest in the activity of sailing.

Out of sight of land, I said I wanted to go to my stateroom. He called a steward to direct me while he remained on deck.

In the cabin I started to unpack my little suitcase when I saw two big trunks and leather bags bearing Mr. Raymond's initials. I got panicky. There must have been some mistake, putting those things in my room! I hurried to the door, to bump into my kind benefactor.

He shut the door behind him and locked it. He had a bottle of brandy in his hand.

"Got a lot of drinking to do before we sight New York bay," he grinned. "Come here to Daddy."

Then even I, who must have been incredibly dumb and foolish even for a girl who had been reared in a convent, knew what was to come. I was filled with fear and horror. There was no way to escape this time. No one to whom I could turn on this strange ship.

And then, as his hands found me, I broke into tears. It was then that he offered me the brandy—told me that I was nervous and upset. I took it finally—anything, anything to forget this terrible panic.

That was the last I remembered. Things began to go up and down, and then round and round.

It was morning when I sat up, heavy headed, and saw Mr. Raymond beside me.

I guess I screamed.

Anyway he jumped up, and began to swear. Someone knocked at the door, and he put his hand over my mouth. Finally I became quiet. Then he sat down beside me and talked for a long time, while my head buzzed and hummed and nothing seemed right. Everything seemed topsy-turvy. He gave me a glass of water and I got dizzy again. I lay still for awhile, trying to adjust my whirling thoughts. I turned over on my face and cried then. I had not wanted my life to be like this. I had wanted this man to be my friend and he had hurt me like that. I hated him then and was afraid of him. I was on a ship and I could not call out that I was in a man's room, passing as his wife when we were not really married. They would put me in jail!

I got up and wrapped the blanket around me. Why had not my patron saint helped me to know when I was in danger? I wished very much that I was back with the good sisters in the convent. But I could not go back now. I was trapped. I had listened when a human devil tempted me, and I had been weak. I decided that just as soon as I got to New York, I would leave John Raymond. I would pay him back the money for my passage and then I would be a good girl always. Only, it was hard to think of going alone into a great city.

"You know," John said, "you better be good to me if you know which side your bread is buttered on. Don't be silly, child, not after we've started out like a happy married couple."

"You did not say that was part of the bargain," I told him. "You said we would only pretend we were married!"

"But, Jeanne, my dear," he said, "I am very fond of you. After we get to New York we will really be married, and I will make you the happiest girl in the world. I am going to buy you beautiful gowns and jewels, and make you a famous actress. All the fame and glory of the world will be yours if you'll be sensible."

He started to come near me again, but I would not let him. "Do you mean that as soon as we can be married you

will make me your wife? And you will keep your promises to me?"

"Of course, Jeanne. I will do all that and more, if you will only love me and be nice to me."

"I am afraid," I told him. "I wish that I were back in Montreal. I wish I had not come with you. I am afraid!"

"Why are you so foolish?" he asked me. "Why can't you realize that you are mine? I have promised you I will be good to you. Here, let me kiss away all your fears. I love you. Why can't you trust me?"

I was weeping more softly now, because after all, I was very young and very much alone except for this man. Maybe love came like that sometimes. I would see.

"If you love me, you will go into the hall until I am dressed," I told him. "Then come back and talk to me some more. I am very much afraid."

He didn't want to go. I knew that, but he was too wise to make me scream for help. I guess if I had not been very ignorant I would have known that it was not real love in his eyes for me. But I did not know, and I wanted so much to believe him. I got dressed right away.

## Girl For Sale

*(Being a few ideas as to how to check up on the boy-friend!)*

**He's slipping if—**

**He lets you walk near the curb. (It's an old European custom that means "this girl is for sale"—so tell him about it.)**

**He doesn't pay attention to you, but addresses his conversation to others in the group.**

**He gets a bit sarcastic, with you as the target!**

**He forgets your birthday entirely!**

IT IS not a long voyage from Montreal to New York, I knew. For that I was thankful. After I was dressed Mr. Raymond came to me again to tell me some more of the fine things I would find and the fine times I would have in New York. He kissed me many times, just light little kisses that stifled all my fears, and made me forget that now I had nothing left, not even honor.

On deck the morning we reached New York. John pointed to the dark skyline of New York. "Look Jeanne. There lies the city of dreams. It is all America wrapped in one city. Broadway is over there, the Big Street that will some day see your name in lights and how down before your beauty. In America you can do as you please, and with your beauty you will rule like a queen.

NEW YORK! I felt the magic of that name the very moment I set foot on New York's streets. John was nice to me. He arranged everything with the customs men so that we were off the pier in no time. Men were shouting "Taxi" like many chattering monkeys. There was a roar that never seemed to grow less. I felt again as a reed must feel when swept by a violent storm, and yet, I did not know why I felt that sudden, compelling depression. John was there beside me. He would take care of me. My photo was on the passport that said I was John's wife.

I thought I would stay right there on Broadway that first

night. I wanted to see those lights and hear the music that John said was everywhere. But John said that he was taking me first to a very good friend who would tell me many things I must know.

But John took me to a train, rushing me quickly through the great station. I was weary from excitement, and soon fell asleep. A long time later when I woke up, John was touching my eyes gently so as not to waken me suddenly.

"We will soon come to the station Jeanne," he said. I did not like the queer place where we stopped. There were a few old automobiles in the station square, but people looked dirty and poor. There was none of the swift moving excitement of New York, with thousands of pretty girls and limousines. I wondered about it all, and asked many questions, but John kept talking, said he had a nice surprise for me.

He called a taxidriver and gave an address. We rode through dirty streets, streets as bad as the slums of Montreal, but I thought little of that. I thought we would come to the nice part of the city soon.

And then—it is hard to tell now! We came to a house, a plain house with closed shutters. It was a mysterious looking house that seemed not to want us there. It seemed as if nobody were home. John pulled a knob which rang a bell. In a minute a very solemn woman came to the door. Her face did not smile. She was a big woman, quite fat, and her hair was like polished brass, it was so red. She seemed to know John very well,

and her eyes looked at me so cockily that I was afraid. "Okay," she said and opened the door for us to enter, but it did not seem like a welcoming gesture.

I was puzzled then, and afraid. I saw the woman put a bar across the back of the door and then turn a heavy key in the lock. I remembered how John had locked the door on the boat, and suddenly I was afraid again.

"Go with the lady, Jeanne," John said. "She will take care of you now. I will see you later."

I did not want to go, but I followed the woman up three flights of stairs and down a corridor to a tiny room where there was an oil lamp on the table, one chair, and a bed. I was stupefied. I wanted to know what it all meant. Where was I? What was going to happen now? I tried to talk to the woman, but she would hardly speak.

"Lie down," she told me. "Get some sleep. You'll do. They like French girls here very much."

"They?" I questioned her. "Tell me who they are." "Men, you dope! Now lie down and sleep. You'll find out pretty soon—"

I fell on my knees and begged her to protect me. "Take



me," I pleaded. "Surely he did not know you meant to do this to me!"

"Know? You dumb spik, that's what he's paid for. If you had the sense of a flea you—but I can't argue with you. Be quiet or I'll slap some sense into you!"

"But John said he loved me. He will not let you do this to me! He promised!"

"Yeah, that's the way he gets 'em. They work it out their own way, and John has his own line. You bit, and you're here. Now dry up!"

Much of the sense of what she said was lost to me. Her slang was beyond my knowledge of English, but I knew I was trapped. That much was clear, and in my frenzy I fought at her, becoming hysterical. I tried to push her aside, but she only laughed, and then she lost her temper and struck me on the head. She hurled me toward the bed and I fell, striking my head against the wall.

Maybe I lay there for hours. I do not know. I know I woke to find the same woman standing over me. She had brought a plate of soup. She explained that was all I would get to eat until I became reasonable. Money had been spent to get me there, and they wanted their money back. They meant to get it.

I couldn't eat. I wouldn't eat. I told her I would rather starve to death, but she only laughed. "Starving isn't an easy way to die, kid. You'll get over that!"

She went out laughing, but she came back later to find me praying.

"Cut the act," she said. "Dress yourself and come with me. You're going to earn your room and board. Men will be coming in soon, and they'll want to see the French baby."

I wept again and showed her Father Michel's little cross. "I cannot do this thing," I cried. "I was brought up in a convent, and I cannot."

Her blows and kicks and curses were unendurable after a while, and at last I followed her, a broken, bruised, terrified girl who walked slowly, as if going to the guillotine. I could have walked more bravely to my death than to that room of horror that waited for me downstairs.

Please let me pass over that first night of terror, the fear, the fight against seeking arms and lips of men from the mines, the awful, desolate knowledge that I was a helpless woman against the world.

I fought. I fought with every ounce of strength that I had left in my broken, tortured body, but the woman, that fiend in human form threatened me with a knife that she said would still my crazy heart. Torture had driven me almost insane, and I tried to kill her with a bottle that I snatched from a table. Men grabbed us, separated us, but the woman called vile names at me, and at last she was pulled into another room.

Then came a man who spoke to me. He spoke English slowly so that I might understand it all. He said he would help me, that if I would trust him he would get me away. Again that word "trust." I had trusted before, and look what I had come to! But anything, anything was better than that house of horror. I would have to trust him.

**I** DON'T know how he managed it all. Maybe he bought me. Well, however he managed, this man told me he would take me away. And he kept his word. I went with him gladly, and if those few weeks I spent with him repaid him for saving me from that house of shame, then I am glad. That, at least, is one debt I paid.

I left him after a while. No matter why. When the time came for us to separate, he gave me some money and told me to be a good girl.

Good girl! Funny how men always say that, and yet, so many of them seem to work against every effort a girl makes

to be good. I do not blame this man. He had been good to me. Wherever he is, I hope he will remember me kindly, for there is only gratitude in my heart for what he did for me.

Perhaps you will think that I am deserving of no sympathy, but withhold your judgment until you read all my story, please. I have sworn I would tell the truth, and I must tell it all.

It was shortly after that that I met Jerry, a laughing young American with nice eyes and a quick friendliness that warmed my heart. It was Jerry, too, who took me back to New York and found a little place for me in Harlem. It was a hotel, clean and quiet and nice, and the manager said I might have a room and my breakfast if I would help his wife with their little girl.

After a week Jerry did not come to see me any more. He was kind to me, but he was very jealous.

When Jerry went away I got a job, a good job that paid me well, and I took up quarters in a hotel on Broadway, the Broadway that Mr. Raymond had once told me would bow before my beauty! My job was in the Stardust Night Club. Life for me began its furious merry-go-round, a mad pace that was to go on endlessly—endlessly.

The Stardust! There is where I shed the last remnant of the old, idealistic Jeanne who had loved and believed in life. A night club that was the rendezvous for all those people who like to sneak into life's sidesteps.

I learned the rackets there. I was no longer the Jeanne who listened and believed what people told me. I was the big-time featured dancer at the night club, and the only one whose name was in lights in front of the Stardust.

At last—at last, I was really on Broadway.

Then I met Tony, the famous tango dancer. The months with him brought back something of the old Jeanne, but perhaps—perhaps I was to blame for all that came after. Tony, like so many others, wanted so much. He wanted me to give up all contacts with Broadway playboys, and would not agree that I could dance at private entertainments and banquets. I thought that I was able to govern my own life, and I would not listen.

The climax came when I was mentioned in a divorce suit. Not my name, just "a pretty, dark-eyed French girl, a dancer." I denied that, but Tony would not listen, would not believe. He knew I had danced for a banquet and the banker mentioned had tipped me generously and he would not believe anything I said. We quarreled fiercely.

When I got back to the hotel that night I started to think. Everything was over now. Never again could I dance with Tony. I would always be alone. Broadway is a one way street, whatever else you may believe. I know.

**I** WAS bitter, bitter and desperate, and so it was natural that I should meet Bill Perry, a nice looking chap who was part of Broadway's demimonde.

Bit by bit I learned what he was doing. He was a special investigator for the police, he said. He was helping them clean up the vice resorts of New York, and he told me how they worked.

The Vice Squad usually work in pairs, with one stool pigeon to every twenty cops. The stool pigeon tells the cops where a girl can be found plying an immoral trade. Then the cops ride out to the place with the informer, who goes in to the girl. As soon as some marked money changes hands, the cops rush in, arrest the stool pigeon and the girl, and take the girl to prison. The stool gets a commission on each arrest. The cops make their money by demanding a bribe from the woman arrested. Shyster lawyers cut in also.

But a stool pigeon makes his money only when he can find girls the cops could arrest. Pretty soon the stool

runs out of prospects, and realizes that he has to trap someone soon or lose his job. Maybe there is a girl he has met who is out of a job. He decides that he can "frame" this girl, even though she is quite innocent, and collect his money just the same. And that's how the vicious, horrible system works out.

They start railroad-ing to prison innocent girls. And countless hundreds who were not sent to jail, have had to buy their way out!

But no one could scare me. I wasn't afraid to tell. When the time came to talk, I did. And now I am telling even more than I told them.

One time one of the stool pigeons went into a doctor's office, a very well known doctor in Manhattan. The stool knew the doctor was out. The nurse let him in because the man said he had an appointment with the doctor. He sat down, and in another minute or two, two members of the Vice Squad entered. The stool pigeon whispered to them, and they called the nurse over.

"Letting in patients when the doctor is gone, huh? That how you increase your income?" They were rough and very insulting to her.

She threw up her hands and cried, "What are you trying to do? This man said he had an appointment and would wait for the doctor."

But they would not listen to her or believe her. She began to scream, saying she was a respectable woman, that it was all different from what they believed. She kept screaming all the way to the police station.

The doctor was approached by the cops who told him he would be implicated for having such a woman as his attendant unless he could fix things up. The doctor was told everything could be fixed for a thousand dollars. The nurse turned over six hundred dollars, all her life's savings, and later was arraigned and discharged.

THE time that the man I thought was a friend turned on me was the time when I thought life was beginning to be fine and sweet again. I had met somebody who was very dear to me. I was free now, and I hoped that maybe there was happiness for me in the years ahead. I was alone in New York, but I had a few good friends. I lived with a fine, middle-aged couple who treated me like a daughter.

I was home one night when my friend came to see me. We were planning all the nice things we would do when we were married. But because of the terrible charges which were framed against me that night, that marriage will never be. I never heard from my friend again. He, like so many others, did not stand by me in my great need.

I swear to you I had no thought of wrong-doing. I was happy and at peace, when all of a sudden, two vice cops burst into the apartment. When they broke in, I could not imagine what was wrong. We thought we were being held up by gangsters.

The next thing I knew I was being bundled off to the police station and the two cops were accusing me of terrible things, making charges against my fiancé and me. It wasn't true! But they pretended to believe. Those cold eyed men with water instead of the red blood of manhood in their veins, those men who had sworn to protect and champion those in need! They sought no proof of my innocence. What they wanted was to prove me guilty.

I screamed and cried. I told them I knew all their tricks, knew they were going to trump up charges against me, and I asked them how much they wanted. They asked me how much I had. I told them I had been dancing for a couple of weeks and had about one hundred and fifty dollars. It wasn't enough. They scorned the sum. They said it wouldn't be enough to feed the chickens with.

The next morning I was up for trial in the court where they used to try all the woman vice cases.

Just before my case came up one of the cops came over to me and asked if I had changed my mind. He said he could get me off scot-free for five hundred dollars. I told

him that I didn't know where there was five hundred dollars in the world that I could get and I had no friend who could help me out. They told me I couldn't get off any cheaper because the prosecuting attorney, who later confessed that he made thirty thousand dollars during the few years he prosecuted these cases, had

## Why Men Like Girls

(Being the results of a questionnaire administered to boys)

Here are the chief reasons the boys gave for liking girls:

Neatness  
Pleasant disposition  
Intelligence  
Nice manners  
Good sportsmanship

Peppiness  
Good looks ('way down at the bottom of the list where it should be!)

to be in on the division. The next thing I knew my case came up. I wasn't able to raise a finger in protest, and I found myself sentenced to eight months in the workhouse. Eight months! Eight months to wear a uniform of a convict and live behind high walls that barred me from the world.

Framed! Railroaded to prison! When I told about it all at the big investigation, they were all dumfounded to think such brutal and savage tricks could be played in the greatest city in the world in our modern civilization.

AT THE reformatory I met many girls who had suffered a fate the same as mine. I didn't mix with those girls very much, because some of them had shameful records, and should have been there. I met dope fiends and sick girls and mentally deranged girls; the strangest assortment of women that you could imagine. But among all these human derelicts there were victims who had been framed and were serving unjust sentences.

Dressed in ill-fitting gingham dresses, doing chores that sickened and repelled us, we were forced to work in the kitchen and the laundry as well as scrub floors. Nothing, nothing to lessen the endless, pitiless march of time that prodded our sore hearts and embittered us against a world that had been cruel, railing helplessly because we had no friends to fight for us.

Guilty? Perhaps visitors wondered sometimes at the

sullen, brooding silence around the place. They could not know that many of us were there through no fault of our own, framed by officers of the law, betrayed by those we had trusted, condemned despite our protests of innocence, because there had been no one to testify in our behalf.

I am free now. I have told what I know. I dared death itself to speak the truth, for I could not suffer more by dying than I have already suffered. When I was called to testify I did so, knowing that my life would be endangered, that I would call down the fury of those men upon me, but I did

not hesitate. I told it all, and oh, it is my prayer that it has helped.

The New York Vice Squad has been reorganized. A number of those who framed innocent girls have gone to prison for long stretches, and the whole system of catching women violators of the vice laws has been made over. I've done what I could to help, and now my task is finished. I'm through. I've learned my lesson, and maybe I shall find a happier future than my past has been. Who knows?



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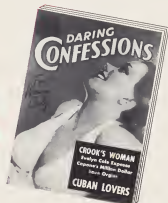
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